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"NEWS OF THE UNIVERSE": THE LANDSCAPE IN THE POETRY OF EARLE BIRNEY AND WILLIAM STAFFORD

by

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Perry Louise Millar

A THESIS
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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled "News of the Universe": The Landscape in the Poetry of Earle Birney and William Stafford submitted by Perry Louise Millar in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Bert G. Almon
Supervisor

David Jackel

Date September 27, 1982

ABSTRACT

> "A new point of view allows the traveller to see deep into certain valleys. . . . For point of view, let us take a contrast, not too often talked of, between two sorts of literature: between poetry that is locked inside the ego, and poetry that reaches out in waves over everything that is alive. [The former] brings us 'news of the mind' . . . [the latter] brings us 'news of the universe'."[1]

The Canadian poet Earle Birney and the American poet William Stafford are two poets who bring us "news of the universe." Their poetry reaches out into the human and non-human, the animate and inanimate world that surrounds us, and expresses joy, pleasure, awe, or concern in what they find. Although there are some outstanding exceptions, in general, writing about the natural world has not been a twentieth-century preoccupation in poetry. It seems important, therefore, to examine the work of two poets who have written so imaginatively about the natural world, to see if they reveal new attitudes to nature, or to ask if they are simply restating old traditions. The work of Birney and Stafford does seem to me fresh and reveals twentieth-century attitudes and concerns. This is seen in their attempts to show that the natural world does not exist outside us. We are, in fact, part of it though we have lost sight of this. At a time when we have split the atom and now live under the threat of nuclear war, the simple quiet urgings of these poets have never been more timely. This thesis moves beyond an examination of each poet's poetic description of a landscape; it is what these descriptions reveal, what attitude the poet shows that is also examined. And, finally, because Birney is a Canadian and Stafford an American, there is also the

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implicit question of possible national differences. This too is considered in the conclusions.

Attitudes to the natural world have a history of their own and it is not possible to survey them fully. The first chapter of this thesis only attempts to touch on a few concepts that will be useful to the reader in understanding the discussions of each poet's work. This is followed by a chapter on Birney and a chapter on Stafford, in which I examine their work separately and in detail. The chapters on each poet are presented separately because I was anxious to avoid the danger of having some foregone conclusions and forcing the work of one poet to fit the other. Thus the final chapter compares the important issues found in each poet's work, and attempts to draw some conclusions about their individual attitudes.

Although there is a ten year difference in age between the two poets--Birney was born in Alberta in 1904 and Stafford in Kansas in 1914--they are roughly of the same generation. Both are from warm, but not materially rich families, and both became professors: Birney has a Ph.D. in English literature and Stafford a Ph.D. in creative writing. And they have both taught writing. Birney was 38 and Stafford nearly 46 years old before they each had their first book of poems published, but since then both have published steadily. Probably the most important difference in the careers of the two men is the choice each made during World War II. Their decisions also reflect very different temperaments. Birney became a personnel selection officer in the Canadian Army, and Stafford, as a conscientious objector, went to work in the Civilian Public Service camps. Birney had seen his own father mentally broken by his service in World War I, and he has continued to be horrified by war, up to the present.

His war poems, from World War II, reflect his despair over humanity's treatment of each other and its inability to solve problems peacefully. But he had married a Jewish woman and he felt there was a danger of the world becoming totally fascist. "I had a stake in Hitler's defeat," he says in Spreading Time.[2] In Down in My Heart, his reminiscences of his years as a CO, Stafford says he believed:

> Continually the forces of war incited frustrations and enmities that led easily to personal rebellion; but for us [conscientious objectors] a personal rebellion against other human beings became a capitulation to the forces we held to be at the root of war.[3]

Neither made his decision lightly or without difficulty, and for both the consequences of the decision were often painful. Later, in the sixties and seventies, both poets spoke out against the war in Vietnam.

Each chapter that examines Birney's or Stafford's work begins with a brief survey of the critics, followed by a consideration of the basic issues that underlie their work and of their motivations for writing. The discussion then proceeds to a close examination of their poems that is loosely based on the concept of the garden. This concept is a metaphor, used by Leo Marx in The Machine in the Garden, that I have borrowed and altered slightly for the purpose of organizing discussion of the poems. Birney and Stafford, as I will try to show, create in their poems an ideal place, or a garden, but in doing so invert traditional attitudes to the garden. The use of the garden is metaphorical; it is not a particular geographic place, but instead, at its most imaginative, reflects a psychological state. The discussion of the creation of an imaginative garden by each poet is followed by an examination of their reactions to the humanly built landscape. They examine what happens when the machine enters the garden. Lastly, I look at what happens when each poet imaginatively or metaphorically enters into his respective garden. This category examines some of their richest and most resonant poetry, and the experience they consider is intensely personal and complex.

In selecting poems for discussion, I tried to include as many of the strongest poems as space allowed. But I have also included some poems because they are representative of recurring ideas and are useful in making points clear. Next to Stafford's, the Birney opus is not large and also includes some fine poems not within the scope of this thesis. I have excluded his tourist poems, although many of them do engage the natural world, partly because Stafford does not have a comparably large category, and partly because these poems take us into other cultures and landscapes with an outsider's eye. In general, I have concentrated on the poems that pre-date Birney's move into experimentation. I wanted to examine these earlier poems closely because they have been most written about and I disagree with much of the criticism. It remains for another thesis to investigate Birney's work in totality. Finally, since it is also not within the scope of this thesis to examine textual changes, I have used The Collected Poems of Earle Birney as being the version he is most recently satisfied with.

In examining Stafford the difficulty lies in having so many poems to choose from. But again, I have tried to select poems that are among his finest and also representative. I have looked for poems to help explain and illuminate the work.

Birney and Stafford are poets who do take us "deep into certain valleys" with a point of view that is new because it is rooted in the twentieth century, and because they never lose sight of the human perspective. In his poem "So Long" Stafford says: ". . . better good shoes on a/ long walk, than a good friend."[4] I hope the reader has a good pair of shoes and enjoys the journey.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

As with any endeavour of personal challenge and lengthy duration, made up of sometimes difficult sometimes tedious work, the claim upon the conclusion, no matter how little or great the success, usually is not entirely singular or personal. Such is the case with this thesis and whatever may have been achieved in it also belongs to many others.

It is certain I should never have progressed as far as I have in the study of English literature had my parents not encouraged my great love of reading. To them I am firstly and foremostly indebted.

I have also been fortunate in the teachers I have studied with, both as an undergraduate and graduate student, and to them I am grateful for their enthusiasm and ideas. To Professor Henry Kreisel I am indebted for his encouragement and advice. To my thesis advisor, Professor Bert Almon, I am grateful for his interest in my subject, and for allowing me to work so independently. To Professor David Jackel I am appreciative of the close reading and criticism he has given this thesis. And I thank Professor Sonja Arntzen for the interest and attention given to my topic.

I also wish to acknowledge the thesis done by Nancy Schelstraete: "Earle Birney's Mountain Poems." Although I do not cite this excellent thesis, the idea she argues of a mountain ethos gave me confidence in my own approach to Birney's work.

But most especially does some of this thesis belong to: Mary Millar-Mostoway who kept the faith, Joe Nold who knows more about the landscape than me, Judy Wapp who shared the meadow, Jacqui Vannelli and

Michael Wayman who are always hospitable, Boukje Elzinga who is always a touchstone, Linda Pasmore who typed this thesis so carefully, Michael Millar who first showed me William Stafford's poems and later made them come alive in performance with The Dumptrucks, and . . . Tom Wayman who supported, encouraged, and was always there.

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CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND

> "Here Spaniard and Vancouver's boatmen scrawled
> the problem that is ours and yours
> that there is no clear Strait of Anian
> to lead us easy back to Europe"
>
> "Pacific Door"
> Earle Birney

In 1925 the geographer Carl Sauer, in an essay entitled "The Morphology of Landscape," pleads with geographers to infuse the discipline of geography with an integrated approach that considers, not only land formations and anomalies on the earth's surface, but also the interrelation of the life forms to their environment. He defines landscape as "an area made up of a distinct association of forms, both physical and cultural."[1] Sauer goes on to quote the Swiss jurist and writer Hans Bluntschli, who holds that "one has not fully understood the nature of an area until one 'has learned to see it as an organic unit, to comprehend land and life in terms of each other'."[2] Landscape, Sauer argues, is not just an actual scene, but a generalization derived from the observation of individual scenes; it is both particular and general, and personal judgement is part of the selection of content.[3] Sauer's essay had an effect on the discipline of geography and the field became quite broad in its scope, although there was also a simultaneous attempt to apply scientific principles to the areas of inquiry. His remarks suggest a far more subjective approach than actually developed. In part, Sauer is asking geographers to examine the connections between the physical, phenomenal world, and the human responses that arise from a confrontation with this world. To this extent Earle Birney and William Stafford are as much geographers as poets. In their poetry they describe the physical landscape with accuracy and a refreshing eye, but they do not stop here. They move more deeply than this into the natural world bringing to their descriptions their own personal cultural attitudes. In part these attitudes shape their perceptions and thus we may find explicitly and implicitly, in their work, expressions of various attitudes to the natural world. Their work, in fact, attempts "to comprehend land and life in terms of each other" and, directly or indirectly, they appeal to us to do the same. It is the purpose of this thesis to investigate and describe the many ways Birney's and Stafford's poetries engage the natural world and the attitudes the poets reveal.

The central argument of this thesis is not complex. The work of both poets begins from similar premises and concerns, moves to very different and personal forms of expression, but the conclusions they point toward and attitudes that emerge are similar. I will attempt to show that, while each poet is capable of beautiful and accurate physical description, their work often goes beyond this to a personal and complex expression of a psychological state that is, by extension, a statement about the human condition. Both poets begin writing with a faith in the importance and value of writing, and both share similar fears about the future, and humanity's role in shaping it. But their forms of expression are very different. On a particular or personal level, the poetry of each shows differing attitudes to the landscape. The natural world, for Birney, is an integral part of his being and this is reflected in his language and imagery. He understands and appreciates the processes of the natural world, but tends to accept them as important simply because they exist. In addition, he is aware that many of our attitudes, as well as our way of life, tend to ensure a separation from the natural world, and he shows the consequences of this, but he does not attempt, via language or metaphor, to bridge this separation. He asserts, sometimes explicitly, sometimes implicitly, the necessity to do this, but ultimately his work is more rational, descriptive, scientific, even rhetorical than Stafford's, and this tends to create a tone of distance in his work.

If Birney's work tends to remain outward looking, Stafford's is inward. Stafford begins writing by allowing unconscious suggestion to direct his work; hence his writing is partly a reflection of process. Because of this and because, as in Birney, the natural world is embedded deep within himself, Stafford's writing looks inward simultaneously into the self and into the natural world. He wishes to penetrate into the processes he finds in the natural world to discover, via language and imagery, a pattern or meaning that it may hold for us. In this way he attempts to close the separation between us and the natural world. His example and his poems are an assertion of the importance of this for our future.

These differences between Birney and Stafford are basic, but just as they begin from some shared premises and concerns, the conclusions they look to, either explicitly or implicitly, converge again into similarities. They both turn many traditional attitudes to the natural world upside down, which roots them in the twentieth century. They question the role of technology in our lives and fear the possibility of self-destruction. They assert the importance of finding and understanding our relationship with the natural world, and both understand that, in itself, the natural world cannot save us; the responsibility for this lies with us. Lastly, Birney is a Canadian, Stafford an American, which raises the question of whether the differences in their work are due to national differences. On a particular level this may be true. Stafford, for example, considers his personal past in his poetry, while Birney has no such category. In general, however, I believe that most differences are due to differing personalities and temperaments. In short, in the important aspects of their work--the attitudes they reveal, the assertions they make, and the fears they express--there is no national difference. The poems are the expressions of two poets very much in agreement.

Before proceeding to a detailed examination of each poet's work there are a few concepts it is useful to understand, and that are helpful in discussing the work of each poet. These concepts are: the concept of a split between the natural world and people, what constitutes a healthy attitude toward the natural world, two manifestations of unhealthy attitudes, and the effects of technology on the natural world. The first concept underlies the following discussions of the natural world and is the notion that there is a split between the natural world and people.[4] Humanity is, of course, part of nature; it too has evolved from the natural world, but we are unique in the capacity to conceptualize, and change and modify our environment. This has given us comfort, convenience and safety, but has tended to impose a perception of division between the self and the natural world. Thus the humanly constructed world is thought of as "inside," the natural world as "outside." This often unstated stance has been an implicit premise in shaping many attitudes in Western European society. It is not possible, nor is it within the realm of this thesis, to describe the long and complex history of the many attitudes that have been held by people about the landscape. Properly described, it is the study of a dense and intricate network in which national cultures, religion, philosophy, politics, science, and the arts both converge and separate; causes and effects are not always clear. At any given period in history it is possible to find attitudes to the natural world among people that are healthy, balanced attitudes, unhealthy or destructive attitudes, or a complex mixture of both.

What might be called a healthy attitude is one that recognizes the beauty and pleasure that may be derived from the natural world, and at the same time recognizes and respects the hazards that are part of any experience there. But greater understanding than this is required since to stop at this point may also lead to an idealization of the natural world that is unrealistic and becomes unhealthy. A person with a balanced understanding usually also understands and appreciates the interconnection of the cycles and systems found there and knows the importance of respecting them. He or she will appreciate the force with which people may interrupt and intrude on the natural world, and understand the necessity to attempt to compensate for necessary disruptions. These people will take care of that which is beneficial to us in nature and attempt to live responsibly.

In contrast, an unhealthy attitude to the natural world may be one that is based solely on an idealized view. This attitude sometimes begins with an aesthetic or a genuine appreciation of the beauty and natural cycles observed in nature, but it tends to ignore the fact that natural forces are arbitrary and potentially hazardous, and a healthy respect for them is important. It also ignores the fact that the natural world may, in fact, be uncomfortable or tedious, a reality known to anyone who may have worked there. There is, however, a second source of an unhealthy attitude to nature and it has important consequences that I shall expand on. This second source is fear.

Fear may arise because of natural phenomena the observer can not explain, or it may be the result of excessive emphasis on natural hazards. Closely related to this is the deep and ancient fear that accompanies a recognition that we are really very small and vulnerable compared to the size and force of natural phenomena. The human animal, with its ability to conceptualize, has developed science, which has explained many natural phenomena. This has laid many fears to rest but has been accompanied by a confidence that through science, and its offspring technology, we may control nature. Since the rise of the industrial revolution the toll inherent in this attitude of confidence has become evident in both human lives and the natural world.

One of the effects of technology has been to create more comfortable lives for people, but this means that they are also more sealed and distanced from the rigours, as well as the pleasures, of the natural world. The natural world provides the raw materials to produce the technology and, both in the methods used to obtain the raw materials directly from nature, and in the production of the technology itself, all too often little thought or care is given to the harmful and often lasting effect this may have on the natural world. That any detrimental effect on nature has a simultaneously detrimental effect on human life is also often ignored, since technology is inextricably bound to our economic system and our society tends to use profit as its measure of success or failure. Few people would wish to give up the benefits of technology, but Birney and Stafford suggest it is necessary to question the values it creates and the attitude it reinforces: that nature is external and may be manipulated.

These attitudes and the degree of emphasis found in them vary from historical moment to moment, from culture to culture, and may even vary within a culture. Religious conviction, forms of political organization, class differences, all influence and modify the force of convictions held about the natural world, and contribute to the nuances of attitudes existing at any one time; indeed, two attitudes may co-exist within one person at any one time. The questioning of our role in the natural world and the search for a balanced relationship is not new, particularly in literature, where three traditional and often opposing areas are defined: the wilderness; its extreme opposite, the city; and mid-point between the two, the rural.

Traditionally, attitudes to the wilderness vary. To early cultures, for example the Christian culture, it signified a desert or waste, as associated with drought which was a manifestation of God's displeasure. Wilderness denoted chaos, a place of corruption. But wilderness also simultaneously held another meaning as a place to retreat to, and come close to God, a place where people were tested and purged. John the Baptist and Christ went into the wilderness for these purposes. Whatever significance the wilderness held, however, the underlying attitude was that it was a place apart, an "other" place outside the self. It is in reaction to this that people are moved to construct shelter, or seek society as a comfort and stay against the wild-ness of this territory. In other periods wilderness has also been seen as a place where the "noble savage" resided and to enter this place was to return to find one's more primitive, but innocent and uncorrupted self. Just as many other cultures, of course, often nomadic in habit, learned to survive well in the wilderness and held a balanced attitude to it, but it is the former attitude, wilderness as an other place, the extreme opposite of cities and all they represent that is important here.[5]

Cities represent a man-made social environment, a humanly created landscape. They are centres, both economic and cultural. Cities are organized around institutions that people have developed, and they represent the extreme manifestation of the impulse to order. In cities the chaos of the wilderness may almost totally disappear, although cities also tend to create their own form of social chaos against which people may react. Life in cities is highly complex, the institutions and power become consuming and self-perpetuating and this, combined with artificial structures, tends to create feelings of distance from the natural world. Seen in a positive light cities also represent the highest achievement of that which makes humans a unique species. Cities are centres of learning, and intellectual and creative life. At their best this represents a potential for a rich and satisfying life for its inhabitants. Frequently, however, the pursuit of knowledge and technology become ends in themselves and the consequences they may hold for human relations, and the natural world, are not emphasized. Furthermore, because the city is artificially constructed, the artistic sensibility is also cultivated. Implicitly the city is the antithesis of nature, hence there arises an aesthetic appreciation of nature.[6] This, and a reaction to the negative qualities of city life, lead to the search for a middle ground where the best of the wilderness can be combined with the best from city life. This search leads to an appreciation of qualities in the natural world, although the solutions for a middle ground are often themselves highly artificial.

Traditionally, however, this solution has been posited in what is commonly called the rural world.

The rural is often seen as a middle ground where a balanced relationship with the natural world may be possible. With the development of agriculture for the production of food, people began to make an imprint on the wilderness. The chaos was pushed back or contained and ordered, but not as far back as in the city. Now what is natural and therefore good is that which is bountiful and reproduces, which suggests an ongoing connection to the natural world. Because the Greeks and Romans feared the wilderness, when they praise the natural it is the land that has been settled and cultivated that they celebrate.[7] The area they refer to is the wilderness redeemed or ordered. Their attitude is represented by what we now call the pastoral, and it has had important consequences in social and literary history.

Leo Marx, in The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America, makes a distinction between two types of pastoralism. The first is what he calls "sentimental pastoralism."[8] It is filled with nostalgia for what people believe to be a better time. It is rooted in a rural or agrarian life, and bears no relationship to the reality that existed then or now. In short, it is an idealized view. Marx associates it with people's desires to withdraw from complexities in life, even realities. He says:

> . . . this impulse [to retreat into sentimental pastoralism] gives rise to a symbolic motion away from centers of civilization toward their opposite, nature, away from sophistication toward simplicity, or, to introduce the cardinal metaphor of the literary mode, away from the city toward the country. When this impulse is unchecked, the result is a simple-minded wishfulness, a romantic perversion of thought and feeling.[9]

The other type of pastoralism that Marx sees is what he calls "imaginative pastoralism."[10] In a physical sense it represents the territory located between the wilderness, which is a primitive world, and the urban which is a sophisticated, often artificial world. Life in this territory represents an harmonious relationship with the natural world. It supplies needs and gives back pleasure. The resident lives free of anxieties created by both city and wilderness, but because the resident has not retreated totally into primitivism, that is, the wilderness, he or she will have retained a level of sophistication or artifice from the city. Thus the resident enjoys the best of both worlds: ". . . the sophisticated order of art and the simple spontaneity of nature."[11] Marx concludes:

> Hence the pastoral ideal is an embodiment of what Lovejoy calls "semi-primitivism"; it is located in a middle ground somewhere "between," yet in a transcendent relation to, the opposing forces of civilization and nature.[12]

In its best usage in literature it also represents a psychological territory. It becomes a symbolic middle landscape created by the mediation between art and nature.[13] It is not a physical place but a psychological or symbolic place that may represent or encourage good human attributes. This idea of a middle ground is important to understand because Birney and Stafford create such a territory, but not in a traditional sense.

Sometimes gardens are aligned with the rural or middle ground. In themselves they have a long and complicated history of their own, but for our purposes it should be noted that one significance they have held, in the Western world, is their association with paradise. The garden is Eden, or perfection, and as such represents the wilderness redeemed. At times, in the past, the human organization of the garden was seen as natural, whereas the disorder of the wilderness was unnatural.[14] Both Leo Marx and Henry Nash Smith use the garden as the central metaphor in their books, and I wish to use it in a similar way to examine the poems.[15]

For Birney and Stafford, however, the garden or middle ground is the wilderness. It is here that the natural world can be perceived most clearly, and they attempt to define the personal meaning it may hold. One category of poems is of celebration or description of the garden. But this category also includes poems that express personal attitudes to the natural world. By locating a middle ground in the wilderness they invert the traditional attitude, but the personal attitudes they express in the descriptions are often quite divergent. Birney and Stafford also have a second category of poems which describes what happens when the machine enters this wilderness-garden. These poems show the effect of technology on the landscape and on our lives, and express fears for the consequences of this. Lastly, there are a group of poems which may be called collectively the poet in the garden. In these poems each poet moves, imaginatively and metaphorically, into the wilderness-garden. Now the descriptions also describe a psychological stance or condition. These poems are a rich fusion of landscape description and the intense feeling each poet holds toward himself and the human condition.

It must be emphasized that this borrowed metaphor is used for convenience in discussing the poems, and is not intended in a literal sense. It is also useful because the metaphor conveys particular traditional attitudes which the poets may or may not use in a traditional manner. In addition, the consideration of the poems is not just an examination of language, accurate or inaccurate description, technique, or use of landscape metaphors. These poetic devices will be considered, but in conjunction with trying to discern what sort of attitude to the landscape Birney and Stafford reveal. They both move beyond description of a scene. They use their engagement with the landscape to convey feelings and opinions about our lives, and these feelings and opinions are intertwined with the beliefs they hold about the natural world, and its role in their lives and ours. How they do this through poetic technique and why they do this are thus closely bound.

A final point must be considered in talking about landscape and this is the language critics use to talk about it. When critics discuss the use of landscape in literature sometimes they find fear expressed, sometimes lyrical praise, sometimes the natural world is a repository of virtue, sometimes it is a corruptor. All these attitudes apply human qualities to the natural world which suggest an active and outwardly exerted force. Around the turn of the century a new word was found to discuss a new literary attitude to nature. This word describes the natural as "indifferent." Again a human emotional quality was ascribed which implicitly suggests the landscape to be a repository of influence that acts outwardly, or in this case, chooses not to act at all. These words that describe the natural world in terms of fear, praise or indifference suggest a problem with language, a limitation in the language's capacity to describe the natural world. This is probably a consequence of our separation from it; we do not have the cultural vocabulary or conceptions to describe integration. But this is what Birney and Stafford attempt, implicitly, through images and metaphors.

It is my feeling that a clearer understanding of the uses of the natural world would be made if it could be seen as a place of neutral value. It is a passive world, it has no will and is not self-conscious and therefore can not outwardly project virtue or vice. It simple "is." If one approaches the natural world as a place that "is" then it becomes easier to see those values that may be projected by the writer. That is one problem with the split between people and the natural world: the responsibility for action or inaction rests with us and many do not recognize this. The processes of the world will continue. We may be able to overwhelm them but these processes are involuntary and enduring, which may be a source of wonder but is not a source of will. They simply continue as long as conditions allow.

This discussion has raised some issues regarding people's relationships to the natural world. Earle Birney and William Stafford do not suggest they have solutions. But they are writers whose work reveals a deep commitment to the importance of looking for solutions. They hold realistic attitudes to the natural world that are very much rooted in the twentieth century. They turn many of the traditional attitudes upside down, and they have obviously thought carefully about the issues. They recognize humanity's inherent instability, and they fear the consequences of this. But both poets also have a deep and lively interest in the human world as much as the natural world, and it is because of this that Birney "cajoles" and Stafford "listens." They are as much geographers of the landscape of human relations as they are poets of the physical landscape.

CHAPTER II

EARLE BIRNEY

> "O men be swift to be mankind
> or let the grizzly take."
>
> "Time Bomb"
> Earle Birney

Like the tree of his poem, "Oldster,"[1] Earle Birney stands in the winter of his years surveying a long and varied career. His hide too is scarred by the successes and failures of his personal experiences in life. And like the old tree, in his poems he has scattered, across our literary landscape, his own "grandsons of green." They are the testimony to his experiences and the bearers of Birney's "news of the universe."

For Birney the natural world is the wilderness which is the garden he describes and celebrates. The natural world also represents a creative model for human behavior and in some instances may act as a metaphor for human experience. He believes we are connected to the natural world, through the lineage of evolution, and by reminding us of this he tries to remind us of our connections and responsibility for one another. In the modern world people have created technology and when this technology, metaphorically the machine, enters the garden it is not only harmful to the natural world, but may be harmful to us. Birney tries to show the ways this happens. And, when he enters his garden, imaginatively, the natural world becomes a reflection of a psychological state which may be despair or optimism about the human condition.

Before proceeding to a detailed examination of the poems, I shall survey some general attitudes of the critics to give a sense of the critical appraisal of Birney's work, and to provide background to my disagreement with the critics' assessment. Following this I shall then proceed to examine two issues that are the foundation of Birney's thought. These issues, as expressed by Birney, have not been seriously examined by the critics in conjunction with the poems and the effect has been that, as yet, nobody has argued that the totality of Birney's work has a coherent foundation, that his view of the world is firmly rooted in rational values and beliefs.

The bulk of the comments written about Birney's work have occurred in reviews as new books by Birney were published. Some of these reviews contain perceptive comments about individual poems, but none of them has provided any cohesive critical analysis of the work as a whole. In 1958 Desmond Pacey included a chapter on Birney in his Ten Canadian Poets: A Group of Biographical and Critical Essays. Pacey assessed each of Birney's books to date and tied them to biographical detail. In general Pacey's assessment of Birney's treatment of the landscape is that it is a hostile or an indifferent environment with which people must cope, drawing on their uniquely human resources "and thus create, if [our] will be firm enough, an island of order in a sea of chaos."[2] Pacey, however, seems unable to see the descriptions of the natural world as anything but hostile or indifferent (which he equates with "threatening").

The fact that there is a contradiction in terms in the words "hostile" and "indifferent" seems not to have been noticed by most of the critics who continue to argue in this vein. This point of view may be traced to Northrop Frye who argued, in 1943, that "the outstanding achievement of Canadian poetry is the evocation of stark terror," induced by the "frightening loneliness of a huge and thinly settled country."[3] Three critics influenced by Frye, who continue to argue that nature is seen as destructive or malevolent, are D. G. Jones in his 1970 book Butterfly on Rock, Margaret Atwood in her 1972 book Survival, and Tom Marshall who published Harsh and Lovely Land in 1979.[4] Each of these works contains some attention to work by Birney but the quality of the criticism is poor. They tend to take portions of a few of Birney's poems and press them into the service of their arguments rather than examining and reading closely the whole poem, not to mention considering it in context of the bulk of Birney's work.

In discussing Birney's work, Jones argues that the image of the mountain in a negative guise in "Bushed" confirms Birney's pessimism.[5] Here, "the isolated man is finally destroyed by an increasingly alien and hostile nature. . . ."[6] Birney, Jones believes, is distrustful of both man and nature and says he "tends to walk with vigilance through a world of strangers, where courage and ingenuity are primarily defensive."[7] Atwood devotes her greatest attention to the poem "David." She sees it expressing the idea of a fall into vision. Before the fall nature is indifferent, but "David's fall into death is the narrator's fall into a vision of Nature as a destructive and hideous monster."[8] Finally Tom Marshall, in his short chapter on Birney, feels that "guilt, in some form or other, informs most of Birney's work: it seems never to be wholly exorcised."[9] Marshall's argument is lacking in clear examples and any serious reading of the poems in totality. He thinks, "There is a tendency as well to regard nature as hostile even when it is only indifferent," although where this occurs is not shown.[10]

In 1971 Richard Robillard and Frank Davey both published books, as part of publishers' critical series, identically entitled Earle Birney. Davey's book contains little penetrating analysis concerning the issues in Birney's work. Davey surveys the work chronologically and superficially, and argues that Birney is a romantic in quest of a myth. This argument is hazily tied to Birney's stance towards the landscape, which Davey believes is presented as "vigorously animate and willful."[11] Robillard's book is more analytical than Davey's and at the outset he says:

> The quest to see nature as somehow humanly significant--to see that nature and man share meanings, while seeing that nature holds its own dominion--is the largest of Birney's motives in his poems.[12]

However, Robillard never pursues this thought logically, and he becomes side-tracked in images and concludes his chapter, "Man, Nature, and War," arguing that Birney attempts to show a world where human myths are the mediating factor between the human and the natural worlds.[13]

Finally, in 1979, Peter Aichinger wrote a critical study as part of the Twayne series, entitled Earle Birney, in which he has a chapter he calls "Nature Poetry." Aichinger accepts Northrop Frye's assertion that Canadian poetry in its nature description evokes terror and that the human world is small and pitiful in the face of the elements.[14] Aichinger also concurs with Atwood's argument that in man's battle with nature if man begins to win sympathy shifts to nature.[15] None of these attitudes, which Aichinger finds in the poetry, is put into the larger context of Birney's poems or related to people's relations with each other. Aichinger also pursues nature as a symbol and in order to include the poems of "social" comment glances at the "Canadian scene."[16]

At some level these critics all seem to have accepted the notion that nature is a willful, active force that is either destructive, hostile, or indifferent and with which people are engaged in a duel. But their criticism seems to me to point to the fallacy of this idea. Their conclusions are hazy: they tend to argue for a mythology simply not present in the writing, and they are unable to tie the body of Birney's work together in any cohesive way. Furthermore, the language they use and the attitudes they represent point to the problems and limitations in language discussed in the previous chapter. Lastly, these critics also represent the dominant tone that has existed in Canadian criticism for a number of years. Traditionally many Canadian writers have used the very awesome and impressive Canadian landscape as settings for their poems or stories. Frequently, the events of the poem or story describe a situation in which a person or people have been overwhelmed by the landscape, but there are also many instances of good accommodations taking place, although critically the emphasis has been on the former.[17] This emphasis leads the critics to see the landscape as exerting an awesome and terrifying, even malevolent force over people. As noted, the critics owe their legacy primarily to Northrop Frye, who has elaborated and expanded his idea, although the basic premise has remained the same. But their opinions suggest that these critics, as much as anyone else, are products of historical attitudes they may or may not be aware of, and that they have inherited a vocabulary they may not have questioned. They may, in fact, be projecting their own fears based on a lack of understanding of the many responses nature can have and has had for people. These critics psychologically place themselves with the ancient view of the wilderness as corrupting and a source of moral decay, and as such I think may be misreading Birney. It is not the wilderness that is threatening in a

Birney poem, but the critics' inability to see it as an imaginative and complex metaphor that may have several levels of meaning.

In discussing Birney's work the tendency is to divide it into categories: Anglo-Saxon poems, war poems, travel poems, nature poems. Naturally any author will write about a variety of topics, and these divisions are made partly in the interests of clarity and convenience. It seems to me, however, that Birney's use of, and attitude to the landscape in his work is made clearer when two underlying issues that consistently recur are understood. They are his belief in the necessity to live creatively and his belief in brotherhood. The exemplification of these issues is, I believe, closely tied to Birney's view of the natural world.

Birney's ideas about creativity and brotherhood are interrelated. In The Creative Writer he says:

> . . . conscious living is the process of apprehending the changing world of our senses at every moment, and reacting by instinct and by thinking to whatever the immediate situation is, in order to eat or plan or make love or walk to the corner store. It requires us constantly to invent, to fashion always new patterns of gestures, or words, or movements, out of whatever kind of a mind and a set of muscles each of us possesses. The outer world is never the same for any two people; and it never stays the same for anybody; we are all originals, and forced to be creative to exist.[18]

Birney is saying that we all, daily, make various forms of creative adaptation to the phenomenal world. He recognizes, however, that this same creativity which helps us adapt to the world, and to each other has also given rise to "a western society deluged and bedevilled by the products of our disordered inventiveness. . . ."[19] And he also recognizes a paradox in the fact that the increasingly creative world is also "increasingly conformist, negative, and destruction-bent."[20] Nevertheless, it has been his enduring belief that creativity is ultimately the necessary key to a better world where creativity is controlled. In particular he believes "The act of artistic creation is itself the strongest blow we can deliver for survival, an assertion of our belief in a human future too wonderful to name."[21]

Birney knows we will not all be artists in the common usage of the word. What is important to him is that our adaptation not be destructive to ourselves or others. As I will try to show, Birney's poems imply that the eternal rhythms of the natural world represent a form of creativity; evolution, for example, represents creative adaptation that ultimately resulted in humans. Thus the natural world becomes a model for human behavior, and humanity at its most creative recognizes this and acts in ways that make constructive and inventive contributions to the human world. But Birney also portrays the paradox he spoke of: creativity turned to a destructive purpose. And this condition, which is irrational and non-creative, leads to an attitude that separates individuals from the natural world and leads them to see it as destructive and menacing. At this point, in Birney's work, physical death may result, which may also be a mirror for psychological or spiritual death.

Birney's recurring geological references and ocean imagery are reminders that we all began from a common source and cell. Because of our common origins we are connected to the natural world and to each other, and a creative accommodation to life recognizes this. It is difficult to be destructive in the conscious awareness of our interconnectedness. Furthermore, these bonds of brotherhood are also a comfort. Humanity's time on earth in a geologic sense has been extremely short; our physical scale in a phenomenal sense is small, and we live in a galaxy, possibly a universe, in which we may be alone. Thus we have only one another, and this should be a source of strength against the terror of the knowledge of our essential aloneness. It is a source of anger and despair to Birney that humans, with their enormous potential for creative life, live so destructively and uncreatively.[22]

For Birney, to be creative means to write. In The Creative Writer he cites one reason Confucius gives for writing or reading poetry: "poetry can give awareness, sharpen the vision; it can help you spot that bird, as well as name it."[23] This is precisely what Birney attempts to do because in doing so he is communicating with others, portraying a vision that gives clarity and meaning to life, thereby creating bonds between people. Another reason for writing or reading poetry that Birney cites is that "poetry can breed resentment against evil."[24] Although he acknowledges that this may not always be enough, it is important that poetry is free to do this. Birney himself often enough expresses a resentment against the evil of conformism, uncontrolled creativity, and the nearly unimaginable consequences of this for humanity. In his poetry Birney may show creativity in its best or its worst guise; he may express pleasure, anger, or despair; the depth of emotional expression may be light or humorous, or it may be dark and intense. Underlying his purpose is an attempt to unite us with one another, and when he engages the natural world, to point to our connection to it. Finally, it was noted at the outset that when Birney describes the landscape, for convenience of discussion, three categories would be used: the garden, the machine in the garden, and the poet in the garden.

In the poems discussed under the first category Birney describes a garden that is not an actual place, but various descriptions of the natural world that he finds himself in, usually the wilderness. These poems may celebrate the beauty, awesomeness, or restorative powers of the natural world, or they may show that it can be a place of danger, which may also be a source of fear for us. By including this latter aspect he retains a realistic view of the natural world. In seeing the wilderness as a metaphoric garden the establishment of a middle ground which inverts the traditional attitude to the wilderness begins to emerge. The poems may also use the natural world as a metaphor for experiences in life, and, because the natural world also implies a model for creativity and brotherhood, they point to the possibility of an attitude that is neither destructive to us, nor destructive toward the natural world.

In the poems referred to under the second category the machine comes into this garden. Now Birney is describing the modern industrial world, the world we have made from our own creativity that also "bedevils" us. Birney examines the consequences of our technological world, both for the landscape and for us; he shows how technology separates us from the natural world and, at its most extreme, from one another. These poems, especially the war poems, are an expression of his resentment against evil. In the poems discussed below under the third category the poet enters the garden and becomes deeply and personally engaged with it. This is not a literal entrance into the garden, but represents an imaginative narrative stance that may describe Birney's personal response to a situation, or describe someone else's response. These poems may include qualities found in the poems considered under the first two categories, such as the beauty of the natural world, or the effects of technology, but now the natural world is engaged in a richer more resonant way. On a purely descriptive level this world may sometimes appear bleak or menacing, but on a deeper level is a reflection of the poet's despair, optimism, fear, or some other psychological state. Birney is examining and attempting to reconcile, for himself and us, aspects of the human condition. These poems still suggest a metaphoric middle ground, but one that requires imaginative and creative residence. It is a place where choices are made and responsibility assumed, but only when these choices and responsibilities are thoughtfully shouldered may we be able to acquire some constructive integration with the natural world.

Birney's first vision of the natural world is the least complex; it is closest to what is usually referred to as "nature poetry." In it he names, describes, and celebrates the garden which implicitly conveys his sense of a kind of creativity. The cycles and processes he describes are inter-dependent and serve as a reminder that humans too are also part of this scheme. But the garden is not idealized; it may also be an oppressive or dangerous place where, when creative adaptation fails, death may result. And underlying all Birney's visions of the natural world is his belief that in itself it holds no meaning or significance. Messages or meaning can only be given if there is a force with a will to direct the meaning, and nowhere does Birney suggest that he believes the natural processes to be controlled, divinely or otherwise. Humanity for its own purposes may use the resources of this world and it may even interfere with and disrupt the basic repetitious cycles that allow the natural world its stable and enduring quality. But even under these conditions the natural world will attempt to adapt to the disruptions and, with or without us, will continue simply repeating, dividing, and adapting as necessary but without meaning. Its only purpose is endurance. There is something wonderful in this relentless endurance of the natural world, but it is only human ingenuity that may examine and marvel at this. Sometimes to do this is to realize the frailty and insignificance of humanity in the larger world. This has led people, out of fear, to attempt to apply meaning to the natural world, or to assert themselves, destructively, over it. Birney, instead, would have us derive a sense of humility in the face of the creativity of the natural processes and live in the world, and with each other, just as creatively and with a comparable sense of community and inter-dependence. Any lessons or messages must originate with our own creative potential which will recognize these things.

The poem in which this attitude to the natural world is most clearly shown is "North of Superior." In the poem Birney skillfully and realistically describes the wilderness area north of Lake Superior. Not only does he describe the physical landscape, but in doing so also conveys the awesome and uncompromising emptiness of it. It contains simple elements: rocks, lakes, trees. He invokes the age of the area by merging descriptive and ancient language with physical description:

> The horseman icecap rowelled the only runes
> and snow-wild wind these eochromes upon
> the raddled rocks that wear the tarns like eyes
> within their saurian skulls (I 20)

Throughout the poem he also uses musical images which, he repeats, can not be heard. These are orderly human compositions such as fugues which, by raising them in our minds then emphasizing they can not be heard, imparts the isolation, silence and the absence, even futility, of human intrusion. Where there is sound it is "Barbaric the clangour of boulders the rhythm of trees/ wild where they clutch the pools" (I 20). This is an area where the endlessly evolving cycles of nature can be glimpsed. Thus the very physical description of the area merges with and conveys Birney's assertion that the natural world holds no historical or mythical significance. He says at the outset:

> Not here the ballad or the human story
> the Scylding boaster or the water-troll
> not here the mind   only the soundless fugues
> of stone and leaf and lake (I 20)

The only messages here are the runes left by the glaciers. This is an area that has not seen an Arthur; it has no legend or myth. And if it has seen a human dream, perhaps by an Algonquin, that too is long since lost:

> the breeze
> today shakes blades of light without a meaning (I 20)

The area has seen some human intrusion but beside the enormity of the landscape and the repetition of the natural cycles there has been little imprint made by humans on this world. The prospector passes through the forest unhaunted. The birches' fingers may be "leprous" in that they make passage difficult, but they do not lead to witches or a trysting place. There are no homes "rooted" here and the only sounds are made by a logger whose shanty is quickly taken over by forest creatures upon his departure. The miner leaves an impression no larger than "little wounds." Even the wildlife leave little trace of themselves. Like the wildlife, man is simply part of the overall process and equated with a wolf; both only make "flickers on the long horizon" (I 21). This place has meaning only to a moose and a man who may be hunting the moose. But even the moose is dim sighted, the man tone deaf, which suggests that in this world's great enormity, and even monotony, neither man nor animal can fathom much of this world, much less make some sense of it. Just as the earlier fugues were soundless, the "inhuman pibroch" is unheard. There is absolute silence, no sound, where no one is there to hear and understand. The moon is neuter and views no legendary rites, and here there is "No heart to harden or a god to lose/ rain without father unbegotten dews" (I 21). If there is a dragon it is "unexorcized" since it represents fire which is an integral part of such a landscape. It has waged its war leaving its mark in the charred pine. The land is silent, even to the poet "guilty" perhaps of trying to wrench some significance (that is, asserting lack of significance) from the landscape. There is only the silence of the eternal life-death cycle. The land is without meaning, the rock is "swordless"; not even God prevails since the air is "heavenless." It is a wet oozy primal land that seems to weep, but being devoid of meaning is unwept for. And the water, continuing the natural cycle, passes into the northern sea where again there is no significance, only the eternal "wap" and "wane" of these waters.

In this poem, more clearly than in any other, Birney shows he does not believe the land, in itself, holds any meaning. It simply "is." It is neither hostile, nor indifferent; the cycles merely continue. His mythic references imply that it is only people who attribute meaning to the land, and even these stories represent a particular world of human invention. In his relentless rendering of a landscape that simply "is" Birney conveys a sense of the awesomeness of it as it continues its processes without intervention or assistance. In fact any human mark is ephemeral. The poem invokes, by implication, a sense of the smallness of humanity. It is no more significant than a wolf, and both are mere flickers. People are a part of this world, just not any more or less significant than any other part. In this the poem suggests a large cosmic process that is harmonious in the sense that each element is related to another element and has a part to perform, albeit a small part. The poem further implies that an integrated view is possible if one avoids trying to find significance in a world that has greater endurance than humanity's conceit suggests. In this way the natural world is seen as a creative place, where wonderfully creative adaptation has occurred on all levels. Each element in the chain nourishes another in some way and the world continues. However, in the emphasis on the insignificance of humanity, and in the awesome emptiness of the place there is a mood of fear. But the fear results from facing the knowledge of our insignificance and of the essential meaninglessness of this world. It implies the question: 'what is the purpose of life?' No answer is proposed, save an implied integration. This is a poem in which the landscape reflects some of the psychological terror of the mind; the mind projects it on to the landscape in such images as: "leprous-fingered birch," "spectral poplar's bark," or "birches blanching pillars." But these images do not mean Birney sees the landscape itself as menacing; it can not be because it holds no meaning. This feature recurs in other poems by Birney and will be discussed in greater detail later. In "North of Superior" there is only an implied solution, but the fact that the knowledge is faced and the question proposed is important.

Although Birney does not believe that the landscape holds any inherent meaning, in some of his poems he celebrates its beauty, power, and order. One such poem is "Takakkaw Falls." Here Birney is describing and naming the world with accuracy and precision. His careful use of language and rhythm used to describe the falls helps convey the power of the water, the noise made by the falls, and the dampness from the spray.

Using their names almost like expletives, Birney begins by naming Jupiter and Thor. Jupiter is the "Lord of the Sky, the Rain-god and the Cloud gatherer who wielded the awful thunderbolt," and Thor is the Norse Thunder God.[25] His use of the names conveys and establishes a sense of power as well as suggesting a beginning. But the real beginning is "High in his own cloud somewhere" (I 154). The opening lines resonate with the "he" and "his" which may be either the falls themselves or one of the gods creating a waterfall. The origin of the falls is high in mountains in glaciers that collect the clouds' moisture. In short choppy lines and hard consonants Birney describes the descent of the falls, the force of the water as it falls from the cliff, the erosion of the rock, and the spray. He names Woden, the Norse god of the sky, and Zeus, the Greek equivalent of Jupiter. The water is like bolts of the gods, eroding trees that now resemble skeletons. The water is cold and batters; it is alive and lunges. He names the falls playing on the sound "Ta-/kak-/kaw" and moves into a sexual image:

> [Takakkaw] batters the brown
> throbbing thighs of his mountain (I 154)

This suggests a unity in nature and out of this conjunction is born "the stream" likened unto a "milk young" child that moves meekly through the landscape. Now the language changes, it is softer and the rhythms longer like the meandering river. The stream grows to rivers, first the Yoho, then the larger Columbia which wends its way to the ocean. There the water "climbs/ by sunladders" evaporating to form cloud and storm when it will once more fall to the glacier to begin again the cycle "down to the/ spawning/thunder" which began the poem (I 155). Desmond Pacey, in Ten Canadian Poets, in discussing "Bushed" speaks of "nature's destructive violence." He continues:

> "Takakkaw Falls" conveys this violence directly, through a description of the power of the waterfall, but also suggests the continual rebirth of life and beauty out of this violence.[26]

It seems to me that to call this "nature's destructive violence" weights the poem with too much that is negative. It suggests a will in nature. While it is true that the falling water contains a great deal of inherent power, in the poem this is portrayed simply as a fact. Water has force when moving and causes erosion but the falls do not exhibit any will or malice directed beyond the physical laws that both dictate and confine its power. Peter Aichinger, in Earle Birney, sees a

> . . . river [that] tumbles and crashes to its death but eventually, after a spell in purgatory, regenerates itself and rises anew.[27]

This seems an erroneous reading. Nowhere is death hinted at, rather regeneration is the consequence of the union of the falls and the mountain. The description of the awesome power of the falls is a kind of celebration of the beauty:

> falls gyring   flings
> rain rainbows like peacock flights
> vaulting the valley (I 154)

Even in the battering power of the falls Birney recognizes the ability of nature to continue to reproduce. The way in which he brings the poem full circle, his choice of the word "spawning" suggests a wonder and celebration on his part for the simple yet necessary natural cycles. Birney can not reduce the force of the falls, or the erosion they cause; to do so would be untrue, but I do not see that he makes any value judgement on this. The poem is an expression of the awesome but creative force of the natural world. It is probable that Birney's personification (or deification) of the natural processes has led critics to assume that Birney is attributing human or divine will to nature. But a careful reading of the poem finds that nowhere is this will on the part of nature present.

"Kootenay Still-Life" is a poem similar to "Takakkaw Falls." Because of its anthropomorphic imagery Richard Robillard, in Earle Birney, attempts to find greater meaning than exists in the poem but can not say what this is.[28] Birney is describing a single topless pine tree that he calls a "bullpine." Pine trees that stand alone are as inscrutable as bulls that stand alone in a field. And the use of "bullpine" also suggests the enduring reproductivity of nature. Just as reproduction is part of the natural cycle of the world, so too is the life-death cycle in the food chain which the crow and beetle represent. This is not a pretty pastoral world but an honest description of a world where all things are inter-connected and nourish each other with purpose. The pine rises from rotting trees killed by a wind, their deaths nourish the pine, and as a "bullpine," it is implied, he will continue his species. He too will nourish creatures who will both eat and inadvertently spread his seed, and he is a perch for the crow who uses the pine as a look-out for food. Thus once again as our eye rises and falls through this canvas we have come full circle through nature's cycles.

One of Birney's finest poems about the nature world, demonstrating his acute eye for observation and description, is "Slug in Woods." It is a kind of celebration of a creature people are often repulsed by. The poem suggests the slug has a message, that his slime will "illume/ his palimpsest" (I 27). But he is just leaving the mark of his presence. The slug's world is likened to an ocean floor. Aichinger argues:

> The slug moving across the floor like a marine creature moving across the floor of the ocean in a way represents the unity of all living things; every creature exists in an ocean of air or of water, and although that ocean is a beneficient and life-giving element it is also constricting, setting limits upon the creature's ability to move and to achieve.[29]

This reading seems reasonable since, as mentioned earlier, Birney is concerned with our common origins in the sea. Also the fact that air is a common medium sustaining us is an idea that will reappear later. In addition, the parallels between the slug and ourselves are important. We share common air, even with the slug, and like the slug, we pursue lives "foodward" leaving tenuous messages of our presence. In geologic terms, our time on earth is no longer than the slug's "Summer's jasper century" (I 27). We too are limited by our physical environment, but are also very much an integral part of it. Through the description this poem shows the natural world integrated and rational and implies a role that suggests harmony, joy, and community for the human world. And nowhere does Birney attribute will, hostility or indifference on the part of nature in the description of the slug.

These poems have celebrated the creative processes and beauty of the natural world. Sometimes it is possible to enter the garden and adapt, at which time it becomes rejuvenative and a source of pleasure. This happens in "Holiday in the Foothills" where we see the poet engaged in the natural world, although not with the intensity that will occur in poems of the third category. Again this world is described with pleasure, and again the natural processes, the eternity of the physical world, is expressed:

Haphazardly the mountains   are weathering
out of hearing   in the sun (I 14)

The poet has escaped from the human organizations of the natural world:

from straight
shrieking roads   square fields   square faces
the cubed implacable factory and the unendable hurry (I 14)

He enters into nature, and humorously imitates it:

I too shall spread myself anyhow
presenting these dry legs (I 14)

His self-description echoes the leisurely description of the first stanza and reminds us of the "spavined knees" of the poplars. He will submit, almost like a lover, to this world to be restored by it. This is nature as a creative, orderly and enduring world that the poet enters. He adapts creatively

to whatever comic western bogle
has arranged this trance (I 14)

The final lines suggest the pleasure and rejuvenative power of the experience. But they also suggest it may not last; it is a "trance" arranged by a cosmic joker. However, comedy also exposes, and it is also possible this "comic bogle" has also revealed creative possibility.

Restorative as the natural world may be, Birney also knows it may be oppressive to people. In a rather amusing but obvious poem, "Eagle Island," Birney shows this aspect. It is also an expression of the city-wilderness split, which is a variation on the traditional city-country (rural) split. Here, we find the search for middle ground in the wilderness not the rural, although the poem does not solve the dilemma. Birney organizes the poem around the East-West rivalry that exists in Canada. The East represents the lifelessness of the natural world when civilization is imposed on it: it is inert, eunuch (I 35). He alludes to the church and the society, Havergal and Bishop Strachan, that have imposed the values that have rendered the natural world thus (I 36). And the East contains aspects of the natural world that make adaptation to it difficult: black flies, gnats, mosquitoes, and poison ivy. With buoyancy and enthusiasm he describes the West Coast which he believes free from this sterility and discomfort. The description concentrates on the best aspects of the coast, and describes it as full of life, smells, tides and erosion. In short, he reiterates the natural cycles. These are not inaccurate descriptions, merely one-sided, an optimistic and positive view of the natural world into which he is going to retreat. Until ". . . it rains ten weeks" (I 37). Then he will return to the certainty of his Eastern life: tea, blizzards, lectures, and students who know the look of a mountain only from a book. But until then he will "steal to Eagle Island first/ and slake my salt Columbian thirst" (I 37).

This humorous twist at the conclusion is revealing. Birney loves the ocean and the coast, his loyalty to it leads him to see it as superior to the Eastern landscape. His preference is for a wilderness untouched by alienating human habitation. He sees the world like his "Holiday in the Foothills." It is a place where he can refresh himself, "slake" his thirst, even survive when the beans and whisky of civilization run out. But this paradise, like most perceived paradises, is imperfect. It is possible for it to rain ten weeks. In other words, Birney shows he recognizes that the natural world can be oppressive, that it may not provide for all human needs. He will return, in spite of its limitations, to the intellectual world that the East represents. But until this time arrives he will "steal to Eagle Island first."

As noted earlier the ocean is an important image in Birney's thought. "Atlantic Door" and "Pacific Door" are two poems which consider each ocean, and at one level, are an attempt to come to terms with the seeming destructiveness of nature. It is not that nature directs destruction to people in these poems, it is just that it is so much larger than the scale of the human world we may not always be able to adapt successfully. At that point we enter into nature as simply part of its processes. The ocean is a dangerous place to be and that is both an attraction and a challenge. It is no reason not to attempt to sail it since the attempt and accommodation are truly creative acts. Both poems, as their titles suggest, are invitations that may also be seen as challenges, and success would indicate communication between "us." In this way the ocean also becomes a metaphor for human experience.

Both poems begin with the same four lines, which suggest the large violence of the sea and the wind, and their potential danger. They are a constantly feuding cobra and mongoose, locked in a match with no death. The metaphor may be inaccurate, even inappropriate, but it is intended to convey a measure of the danger and violence of the territory that must be passed through to reach "us." The sea is a great body of communication, we all come from it, and it is the common element between continents. So vast is this territory, "the great ships are scattered twigs/ on a green commotion" (I 93). Even a plane is a "fugitive mote." In other words, humanity's inventions are meagre in this world. In this ocean

> . . . a billion
> years of spawning and dying have passed
> and will pass without ministration of man (I 93)

Again Birney emphasizes the age and endurance of the natural processes with no help from us. Those who have travelled this sea, explorers, adventurers, sailors, fishermen, pleasure seekers have all tried in various and sometimes arrogant ways to make an accommodation with the sea and failed. In spite of them it still remains unchanged, relentlessly the same. But the invitation still stands; "come" Birney says, bringing whatever you must: the desire for "gain" or "solace," either of which people use as a comfort, or stay against the knowledge of their smallness. To meet is the important thing. Birney's only words of comfort or advice are to:

> . . . think no more than you must
> of the simple unhuman truth of this emptiness (I 93)

Robillard has equated "unhuman" with inhuman, but I believe Birney chose the less common "unhuman" with care.[30] It may be that this emptiness seems inhuman, cruel, and barbaric, but there is nothing to suggest that Birney sees nature has a will that directs non-compassionate behavior towards us. I believe the sense Birney intends in "unhuman" is that of a truth beyond or not of human devising. This meaning, in fact, further underlines just how far outside our humanly constructed systems (sometimes devised to give comfort against this fact) the natural world is. He concludes the poem:

> [think no more . . .]
> that down deep below the lowest pulsing
> of primal cell
> tar-dark and dead
> lie the bleak and forever capacious tombs of the sea
> (I 93)

Here he reminds us of our evolutionary origins in the sea and that even deeper than the simplest cell of life lie the tombs for the dead. Even the tombs themselves are dead, which suggests a dreary finality to the life-death processes.

The poem is bleak in its view that human efforts are small, frail, and often futile beside the physical size and power of natural processes. Nonetheless, it does issue an invitation to "come" to try the sea, and although death may result at the end we enter back into the natural environment from which we evolved. Implicit in this reminder is, as Aichinger points out, a reminder that since we are all evolved from the same source we are then all linked to each other.[31] I believe, however, at a deeper level the poem may be an attempt by Birney to come to terms with human mortality, his own and humanity's. If the sea is the sea of life, Birney extends the invitation to sail, challenge and perhaps fail, but at least it has been tried. And success would mean communication and brotherhood. The world is organic and we are connected to it but the conclusion suggests a resignation with the inevitability of death. The emptiness or meaning of life can not be explained, but the poem implies obliquely that success, that is, connection or communication with each other, is a creative gesture that can give solace.

The similar poem, "Pacific Door," was written two years later and is more optimistic. As noted it begins as "Atlantic Door" does by describing the same eternal processes between the sea and the wind. Again an invitation is issued to

> . . . come
> by a limbo of motion humbled
> under cliffs of cloud (I 141)

Just as Birney described some events that took place on the Atlantic, so too he describes some events of the Pacific. In this poem he is more specific and concentrates on the early explorers. This is a significant change. Certainly the Pacific has wreaked its toll on ordinary fishermen, sailors, and adventurers, but this time Birney singles out a group of men who were in the Pacific for a purpose. Imperialism and the quest for riches and a route to the Orient were the motives behind most of these voyages. But at that time peoples' understanding of geography was minimal, and to undertake these voyages also took courage and imagination. Some lost their lives here, some found paradise, and some violated the natural order they found by killing the otters and cheating the native inhabitants. These explorers discovered that there is no Strait of Anian and North America is not a part of Asia. He says:

> Here Spaniards and Vancouver's boatman scrawled
> the problem that is ours and yours
> that there is no clear Strait of Anian
> to lead us easy back to Europe
> that men are isled in ocean or in ice
> and only joined by long endeavour to be joined (I 141)

This knowledge is a "problem" in the sense that we are on our own. If Europe traditionally represents home, civilization, and a place where life is rooted and orderly, then we are not within easy reach of this, but this in itself suggests a challenge. At another level, however, all the world is "isled" in some way and the problem is how not to be spiritually separated, or put positively, how to be joined in brotherhood. One way this is possible is through the common bond of the ocean, or life. This will only be accomplished by "long endeavour." The next line again issues the invitation "come" but this time on ". . . waves of desire that well forever" (I 141). He is asking that people come only motivated by desire to be joined. This more optimistic invitation lightens the tone of the line that follows: "think no more than you must" (I 141). It is like friendly advice, almost as though the comfort offered now is: 'do not bother about this emptiness if you can avoid thinking about it.' The final lines are identical with the final lines of "Atlantic Door," with one important change. The "far dark tomb" below the "lowest pulsing primal cell" that connects us is no longer "dead" but merely "still" which may mean absence of sound or motion, or continuance (I 141). In death we ourselves will not continue but the natural processes that replenish life and ensure continuity will.

"Pacific Door" is not only more optimistic but also a clearer expression of Birney's attitude to the natural world and people's relationship to this world. This ocean is the place where "scurvied traders trailed the wakes of yesterday" (I 141). The idea that the sea represents "yesterdays" that traders followed the markings of suggests that the sea represents a continuity of experiences. Even if the "wakes" are deaths it implies a connection, that even these deaths are significant as representative and signposts of human experience. The traders are scurvied, which indicates that adaptation in the world has not been totally successful but the potential remains. The rhythmic natural cycles, represented by the ocean, are an expression of a creative fact, and the ocean, or life, is a possible place for creative expression by humanity. The explorers represent this potential but it has not always been successful; greed has been a motive for these journeys and this has hindered creative expression. It is ironic that the search for the Strait of Anian, which was the search for riches, failed, but in fact taught us a greater lesson:

> that men are isled in ocean or in ice
> and only joined by long endeavour to be joined (I 141)

The great creative potential, which would meld person to person and humanity to the natural world lies in the "waves of desire that well forever" (I 141).

In poems such as "North of Superior," "Atlantic Door," or "Gulf of Georgia" (in which Birney invites the reader to return to the sea and "wash your mind of its landness" [I 127]) Robillard argues there is

> . . . real tension between the will to discover or impose myth and the realization that "the breeze/ today shakes blades of light without a meaning" [I 20]; the rains and dews of Canada have no chthonic father.[32]

Robillard further argues:

> Within the anima and animus of nature, people live out their desires, ignorant of "the simple unhuman truth of this emptiness" [I 93, 141]. "Atlantic Door" and "Gulf of Georgia" bare the need to "wash your mind of its landness" [I 127] to discover the nonhuman "other" of nature, the destructive element.[33]

In all the poems, grouped under Birney's first vision and including these cited by Robillard, I do not see a desire to discover myth. Because there is no myth or meaning it does not automatically follow that there is a desire to find one. The meaninglessness does, however, have consequences which may be a cause for anxiety. This discovery points out the smallness of the human in the scheme of the non-human world, which may also be a source of fear. But this discovery also suggests an attitude toward the creative forces of the natural world that ultimately may be a source of benefit and comfort to us. To discover the "nonhuman 'other'" of nature is not only to understand what Robillard interprets as destructive but, as Birney tries to show, is also to discover our place in this scheme. Moreover, as Birney also shows, the "nonhuman 'other'" of the natural world is also a cause for joy, celebration, and comfort.

The natural world, at its most "destructive" or most pacific, like the human world, is governed by physical laws just as wonderful as the phenomenal aspects of the natural world, and the two can not be separated. It is a measure of Birney's personal engagement in, and understanding of the natural world that he presents both aspects as clearly and as honestly as he can. This is not a threatening world, but one with order, repetition, and continuity. It represents a kind of creativity that we, as humans, should strive to attain. And Birney is also realistic. We may not always succeed in adapting creatively, both to the natural world and the human world, but to have tried is important. It suggests others may follow and succeed, thereby creating continuity and community between one another.

As noted earlier, in Birney's second vision the machine comes into the garden described above. In the poems of his second vision Birney describes the physical consequences our industrial world has for the landscape. Industrialism, in part, represents human ingenuity that may no longer be creative; in fact it may be abusive to both the natural and the human world. One of the extreme consequences and paradoxes of human ingenuity is that, at its least creative, it cuts us off from any participation in the natural world. The result of this is eventually to be cut off from each other. At its most extreme this creativity becomes destructively directed against each other in the form of war. The poems of Birney's second vision show, in various ways, the consequences of irresponsible creativity, failed communication and brotherhood.

The poem "Transcontinental" evokes Hawthorne's description of a train passing through the countryside as recounted by Leo Marx in The Machine in the Garden.[34] A little over a hundred years after Hawthorne recorded his thoughts the garden is no longer simply intruded upon, it is sick because of the extended intrusion. In the poem Birney describes travelling across the landscape in a transcontinental train. He likens people to nits or parasites which suggests both their scale and role. In using natural resources to build an industrial society we have made the land sick. The images of the land are of sickness in a woman scarred by settlement and plagued by parasites. But in naming us nits he is also suggesting our own stupidity or obliviousness. Although the land may not die, we age her quickly and only we can cure her.

"Way to the West" explores a similar theme. Birney is driving west and twenty miles from Sudbury discovers the trees are dead and the colour of the landscape is "horseshit ochre" (II 136). In describing the smelter, which stands on the "skull of a hill," he says the smoke stacks resemble

> a phallic calvary
> ejaculating some essence of rotted semen
> straight up like mass sabotage at cape kennedy (II 136)

Now reproduction is not full of life but is full of sickness and death. And the people on the street mirror the ravaged landscape: they spit a brown substance, have miner's coughs, and scars. To Birney this seems like hell, but he doesn't stop with just a description of this landscape; he attempts to show some of its economic and political roots. This is the "Center of Free Enterprise" a sign proclaims as he leaves the town (II 137). As he continues west, eventually driving into moonlight and "dumb firs," he sees another sign, indicating the French River. This is the old traditional route west which once meant passage to furs, and dreams of wealth and the riches of the Orient. Now the "Way to the West" leads to Sudbury and Vietnam, the logical legacies of the free enterprise dream, which began on the French River. This reference suggests a connection between destructive attitudes to the natural world and each other, and an economy based on capitalism. But beyond the radius of Sudbury's destruction the landscape still endures, although the moon shines mutely and all of nature seems silent. He is cut off from nature in the aftermath of the sights just seen. In fact, he carries the sounds of the industrial world so deeply that the sound of a jet is at first perceived as a growl and only "after it passes we realize/ we'd been hearing the river all along" (II 138). In this poem Birney shows not only the damage to the natural world by technology, but that the effect of technology is also to damage ourselves and isolate us from the natural world.

Two poems that continue an examination of the consequences of technological development are "What's So Big About Green?" and "The Shapers: Vancouver." "What's So Big About Green?" is a pessimistic view of the industrial world and absorption of it carried to the logical conclusion; "The Shapers" suggests we have a choice in our destiny. Birney begins both poems by celebrating the evolution of life on earth. Stubbornly "Life" continued its activity: to evolve, "infecting air/ soil/ lakes" (I 148), "twenty thousand [years] for firs to mass/ send living shafts out of the rock" (I 164). These passages emphasize how long this world has continued, millenia, where the plant and animal life co-existed nourishing each other. Then the "First Men" (I 149) arrived and they "contrived their truce/ with sea & hill" and co-existed with nature (I 165). These were the first "dreamers" or "shapers" who have now been hushed and where

in the hullabaloo of bulldozers
dynamite dynamo crane dredge combustion
buried them deeper than all compution (I 165)

Finally the "End Men," the white men, arrived and in a few short years the woods and animals were gone. Then the land was searched for minerals, trains arrived, roads and powerlines were built, logging begun, and lakes dammed. Birney says of all this in "What's So Big About Green?":

Real progress for sure
though no one believed my generation
would be smart enough to finish it

But We were (I 151)

Finally resorts are built complete with psychiatrists, saunas, highrises, and helicopters. Ironically, the resort is called the "Place of Healing Chalet." But in the name of convenience and technology the landscape is being systematically destroyed. What was once "infected" with life is now being infected with death. The fish in the lake have died from pollution, the animals are in zoos. Rumour has it a berrypatch is at the end of the lake, but this has the credence of Sasquatch stories. The mountain peaks are blocked by the haze and the springs are contaminated with radiation. The lake is being drained and foliage killed. Birney assumes the voice of a proponent for this world when he asks:

So what's so big about green?
It's made to rot
like flesh (I 153)

What once sustained new life is now perceived as sickening; green is gangrene. Our life, it is argued, is just science fiction, none of the other planets have it. Now, what has existed for millenia is wiped out in four generations. Human ingenuity has created irreversible death. No warfare weapons have been used and nature did not even contribute a natural disaster.

In "The Shapers" Birney suggests we are alone, that is, disconnected, lost in our way. He wonders "is there a rhythm drumming from vision?" as the "First Men" had, or "shall we tower into art or ashes?" (I 166). Our choice is clear: creativity or destruction. But he suggests that just as we have shaped the destiny we seem bent upon we can decide differently:

> it is our dreams will decide
> & we are their Shapers (I 166)

In these poems Birney is angry and alarmed by our attitude. In contrasting first a landscape that has evolved through long, slow creative processes with our mindless use and abuse of this world, he is showing the consequences of human ingenuity not used creatively. Our values are being dictated by our technology; use of it has become an end in itself. It cuts us off from the natural world, which represents an integrated life. There is something wonderful about the fact that the hydrocarbons persisted to infect the planet with life. This proposes a creativity that is the antithesis of our use of human technology. But because we are cut off from the natural world by technology, which is designed to give distance, we lose sight of this earlier form of creativity and succumb to the distancing values of the technology.

In "North Star West" Birney makes an attempt at reconciliation. As in "Slug in Woods" air is likened to an ocean[35]

> where the moon--below?--is boat longdrowned
> and phosphorescent on the air's Atlantic ooze
> and we some deepsea noser with a manta back
> that cruises belly up toward a surge of clouds (I 156)

Travelling through the air gives a new perspective. The landscape is set forth in descriptive terms as seen from the air: northern Ontario is seen in terms of its age; the prairies are described in a rug image; the mountains, which are in clouds, are likened to an ocean or an icy continent. Human elements are also included in these descriptions, but there is little value judgement implied. The Ontario farms are toy-like, the prairie towns dustless, the straight prairie roads are simply contrasted to the curves of the lake country. Looking down is like looking down a microscope:

> Cloudless again the plains lie like a slide in our microscope
> amoebic the lakes   forests like fuzzed protozoan
> A mile of contour-ploughing makes its thumbprint on the glass
> (I 158)

This serves as a reminder of our scale, our common origins, and suggests the possibility of an integrated view of the human and natural worlds. Whenever the plane lands Birney suggests some sort of reinvolvement with society, or some form of reconciliation. In Toronto the plane is caught "bat-footed in Toronto's hair," or "in one curving reach we clasp all Winnipeg," in Edmonton the shadow of the plane "widens to wing-shape/ like a butterfly rises to mate us" (I 156, 157, 158). The final landing is reminiscent of "Takakkaw Falls":

> Roaring and soft as a waterfall down from the timeless
> we swoop to the Fraser
> lassooing Vancouver's noon in the arc of our turn
>
> We sink and are stayed
> on the pitiless hardness of earth (I 159)

This is like a common birth, an arrival into life, into the hustle and bustle of Vancouver. Frank Davey, in Earle Birney, cites the final three lines of the poem as showing, ". . . he [Birney] prefers even Air Canada's [sic] utopian illusions to the reality of the world to which he must return."[36] The reality Davey probably has in mind is the previous stanza which reads:

> Billboards and baggage checks master us
> headlines open old wounds
> we bruise in a cabfull of cares to the city (I 159)

But I think the final lines of the poem seen in the context of the whole poem suggest a richer vision. Birney concludes (to cite the full conclusion which Davey does not):

> Yet for a space we held in our morning's hand
> the welling and wildness of Canada the fling of a nation
> We who have ridden the wings of our people's cunning
> and lived in a star at peace among stars
> return to our ferment of earth with a memory of sky (I 159)

Certainly the conclusion suggests the inevitable fact that life goes on, and that it may be hectic, but we must participate in it. But the baggage checks, headlines, and taxis are part of the "ferment" which is also excitement and effervescence, which suggests something more than wearisome cares. Aichinger has pointed out the similarities in metaphor between "North Star West" and "Flying Fish". Like the fish in "Flying Fish" the passengers have risen from their element which represents "the upward striving of all orders of life, and specifically for man's struggles to rise out of intellectual darkness."[37] For awhile they passed through the air-ocean which is the common source and sustenance of us all. They have flown in an airplane made by human ingenuity and the airplane, known as the North Star, which is also a directional guide, is likened to a star peacefully existing with other real stars. The passengers have risen above their limitation in a craft created by people to extend their confines. What has been seen is the beauty and enormity of the land and Birney presents this is purely descriptive terms. Seen from the air the landscape and the human elements co-exist which suggests the possibility for this on returning to the land. The human, social world can not be ignored, we are of it and must return to it, but the plane trip allows us the opportunity for a new perspective and a glimpse of new possibilities. It has allowed a glimpse of a union. This is "the memory of sky" which is important because it reminds us of our potential and our connectedness. The natural world and the human technological world have been juxtaposed, but this time they have been seen optimistically.

The creation of technology has grown out of our industrial world. The industrial world sometimes is also directly related to an economic relationship that involves the natural world. In several poems Birney contemplates people's economic relationship to the landscape. Two poems, "Man on a Tractor," and "Prairie Counterpoint" deal with farming. One way that human society developed to ensure its nourishment was to develop agriculture. "Man on a Tractor" considers the thoughts of a war veteran who has been given, for war service, a grant of land to farm. When younger he worked first on a farm for someone else, later rode the rails with his brother in the depression, fought in the war in which his brother died, and finally returned to farm in Alberta (I 96-97). But the man senses what his brother articulated: there is something wrong with a system in which the production of food is tied to profit. Some get rich from the labour of the farmer and never even understand this labour or what it means (I 99). This inequitable relationship means that each of us is further thrust apart from each other. In this poem the natural world also functions in a second way. Woven through the poem are tourists who use the natural world for pleasure and holiday. They are a foil for the brother's arguments on inequality; they are those whose "lives are consent to all that has been" (I 98). Now, sitting long hours on the tractor, the man knows his thoughts would be strange to the tourists who still move around the landscape. As a result of two separate and distinct uses of the land, the poem points to a separation that cuts us off from each other. To be a tourist and use the natural world solely for pleasure is a one-sided relationship and leads us to forget that for those who work in it, it may be monotonous or oppressive, or that because of economic inequality they may not have access to the natural world as a place of pleasure. The poem is another attempt to consider some of the reasons for separation from each other, and show that these reasons may be partly related to our relationship to the natural world.

In "Prairie Counterpoint" the poem is divided into three sections. The first stanza and section begins: "The wheat flows east in the wind/ brimming the land's plate" (I 23). This is an image of fullness and plenty but the price of this is a settled landscape "knifed" into squares by roads, and divided by telegraph poles and wires. Sitting in this landscape, in a car, are two youths. This final image suggests they are cut off from the land--they are inside the car--and they "wait in their dust" which suggests a lack of clear vision. The brief description of wild prairie, farmed land, human structures on the prairie, and the youths contains the elements of the whole poem.

The second section of the poem is comprised of stanzas which alternate between descriptions of the landscape and a reminiscence about a farm family in the district. The prairie descriptions evoke the landscape; flora and fauna are described and named and in a few instances there are references to human intrusion: the buffalo are gone, hunters wait for geese. The alternating passages tell a familiar story of a man whose family were prairie settlers, who has worked hard farming and has set aside land for his sons. Thus far none of the sons have taken up the land. The third section of the poem, which describes the town, points to some of the reasons the young may leave. Just as the landscape has been intruded upon, so too has the farming society been invaded by an outer world, an industrial world that has created cities and makes jukeboxes, and has changed the nature of farming practices. That world overwhelms the farm communities and entices the young away. The lives of those who remain in the farm community are empty, but they do not want the vagaries and poverty of farming. New values have come and these have cut people off from the values of farming (I 26).

The third section also describes the two youths, perhaps the two sons of the farmer, still at home. They are cut off from the natural world, they move in a world of beer parlours, poolrooms, and jukeboxes. Eventually they pick up two girls and

> forearmed
> with barber's bootleg and the druggist's rubber,
> they drive along an empty road
> and park in the darkening thistled ditch.
> The wheat flows east in the wind
> brimming the land's plate.

Thus Birney brings the poem full circle, and now the image of plenitude contrasts to the sterile and bored intercourse of the youths. The poem points to some of the reasons for disconnection. But its greater effect is in its evocation of this disconnection achieved by the counterpointing passages. Now continuity to both the land and the family is lost.

In several poems Birney considers the urban landscape and the effect of it on our lives. "Billboards Build Freedom of Choice" is a picture of just how far away from the values of the natural world we have come. Birney assumes the voice of a thoughtless person who has succumbed to the messages of the industrial world. Billboards advertise, and advertising lies and perpetuates myths such as there is unlimited freedom of choice, and that we must have "KEE-RISPIES" and "KEE-RUMPIES" (I 55). "Landscapes is for the birds," and "yedoan hafta choose no more between/ say like trees and billbores," the narrator says (I 54, 55). In this poem the natural landscape has almost disappeared; it is behind billboards that, as Birney tries to show, build bigotry and chauvinism, and far from building freedom of choice suppress and manipulate choice. The poem shows the extreme consequence of our human ingenuity; it is now destructive and uncreative.

The "Ballad of Mr. Chubb" shows the toll on human relations in the billboard world. The poem is loosely based on the ballad form and the final lines of each stanza, which are the only reference to the natural world, serve as the ballad repetition when they describe some feature of Minnesota landscape. The poem moves quickly and impersonally, describing Mr. Chubb and his urban world, toward its central episode. Mr. Chubb "sells Chubbsidized/ Cars on Chubbsidized Terms" (I 47). He is surrounded by artificial noise and other garish advertising. Not far from town is the countryside of Minnesota but it is pushed back and overwhelmed by the insistence of the commercial world. Mr. Chubb does not think for himself; he believes propaganda or advertising (I 48). He owns an unstocked fallout shelter which suggests an acquiescence in self-destruction, both personal and universal (I 48). Mr. Chubb's only human relationship is the tenuous and sordid affair with Lena who with her boyfriend, Slim, murder Mr. Chubb for his cash. Mr. Chubb is buried under the nettles of the Minnesota hills and even the natural world is then unpleasant; it stings. This is a world based on cash, where lives are empty and have no value, and in which the natural world, because we are cut off from it, is no more than a backcloth and has no importance.

This industrial world which we have created for ourselves out of our own cleverness also leads us to devise weaponry with which to kill each other. The business of war is part of a system the twenty men in "Ellesmereland II" participate in. Taken together the two Ellesmereland poems (I 161) suggest that we may not survive a holocaust caused by this system; the potential for humanity to evolve again out of this bleak and northern garden is non-existent. "Ellesmereland I" shows there are limits to the creative potential of some parts of the natural world. On the other hand it is remarkable that flowers do grow there, but we know the growth of which "Ellesmereland II" speaks will only ruin this environment and prevent our appreciation of its creative, although limited, capacities, thereby making us beholden to the technological growth we establish there.

During World War II, Birney wrote a series of poems in which he expresses his despair that people seem driven to war with each other and hurt each other. "Hands" is an expression of all the differing ways in which hands are used to kill each other. Birney compares these hands to tree branches he sees while paddling around the shore. He reminds us that in the forest there is a kind of battle but there "the fallen have use and fragrantly nourish the quick" (I 67). This is an orderly world and he is removed from it; he is part of the human world where war is being waged. Back in the city more hands continue the war. He says none of us are "of these woods" and concludes "our roots are in autumn and store for no spring" (I 68). The fact that Birney can not even feel that somewhere there must be spring and a new beginning is a measure of his despair and alienation. The loveliness of the autumn is now, not rejuvenative but simply "Too bewildering" (I 67). D. G. Jones, in Butterfly on Rock, believes Birney is often cynical in his view of man. Jones continues:

> That view emerges in "Hands," as he remarks on man's obvious superiority to the rest of nature. The hands of the cedar are cold and unskilled and shall neither focus on a bombsight nor sew up a bayoneted bowel.[38]

Jones continues by quoting the final lines which he says show nature's superiority to man. Jones concludes that nature may be hostile, but man is even more to be feared and distrusted.[39] That Jones sees Birney arguing our "obvious superiority" is, in my view, a misreading of the obvious, and taken together the three points Jones makes seem contradictory to each other. Furthermore, nowhere has Jones shown Birney expressing nature as hostile, unless we are to infer that the images convey this. A superficial reading of Birney may suggest cynicism but I believe it is not cynicism, but despair, disappointment and confusion over people's behaviour that Birney expresses here. No world makes sense to him and this is what is reflected in the images of nature. The cedar has "webbed claws," the balsam branches are likened to gaunt Jews' fingers, but this world is "green/ green not of us" (I 67). The landscape has become a reflection of his own dark mental state.

In "Dusk on English Bay" images and words from the first half of the poem are repeated in the context of war descriptions in the second half. The first half describes the scene on English Bay as the sun sets. The scene is well rendered as he describes the orderliness of the artificial light coming up as the sunlight fades. It is a picture from a distance so even the activity of the beach scene has a kind of order and the natural world becomes hard to distinguish from the human world where we see "The moon behind a row/ of moons" (I 70). But there is an ominous tone created in the cumulative effect of some of the images: "legs/ unsexed," "arms severed/ with twilight," "whitening ribs of the raft divers/ flash[ing] cream arcs," the evening star "an arrested rocket," and "Nights dissolvent eat[ing] into the west" (I 70). As the poem continues we realize Birney is following the path of the sun, and in the second half it rises over places where rockets are "unarrested" and limbs are unsexed and severed by a rain of iron. The sun will continue its travels, nothing can stop it which reminds us of the orderliness of nature which has been juxtaposed to the chaos of war. It will rise again over the Atlantic and with its return will come the memory of where it has been. Robillard points out that we have failed to achieve the same kind of order as the natural order of the sun's cycles.[40] Night fosters our illusions of order as presented in the first half of the poem, and thus Birney would wish to cling to it. But it is an illusion; our creativity and brotherhood have failed and, in effect, night still represents spiritual darkness and chaos in the form of war.

Birney's second view of the natural world presents some of the consequences of our humanly-created industrial landscape for the natural world and for us. Technology represents a form of human creativity, but as Birney tries to show it has the effect of cutting us off from an understanding of our role in the natural world. It becomes an end in itself, and in its most extreme form it cuts us off from each other and the result is the creation of a condition in which we become destructive toward each other and ultimately ourselves. Most of these poems are pessimistic or angry. They express the poet's frustration over a kind of creativity and sense of brotherhood lost. The garden is sullied by the machine we have created and enslaved ourselves to.

When examining "North of Superior" it was noted that the recognition of the meaninglessness of the landscape gave rise to an element of fear that is reflected in the language. This quality is richly embedded in the poems that may be grouped under Birney's third vision. Here the poet enters the garden and becomes deeply and emotionally involved with what he finds there. Sometimes this is not literally a personal response by Birney, but may also be an intensive use of the natural world to describe an imaginary persona or situation. These poems are among Birney's most mature and complex. In them he expresses many of the ideas contained in his less complex first and second views of the natural world, but now the experience is intensified. The garden becomes both a metaphor for human experience and conditions, and a mirror to the poet's psychological response to his observations. Now failed creativity and brotherhood are a dark and chaotic world which may result in physical or spiritual death. This is reflected in the images used to portray the natural world. This is the nature critics have seen as destructive or malevolent. But Birney is clear that it is not the natural world that is willfully violent, it remains the world without ballad or myth of "North of Superior"; now it is we who in fear or delight project attributes on to this world. When Birney's poems are examined from this point of view we find, not a poet expressing simply fear or malevolence about the natural world, but one who is using this world in a rich and complex way to express deep concern and compassion for humanity and its future.

A poem that harkens back to "North of Superior" and also begins to show some of the features discussed above is "Leaving the Park." This poem represents a modern view of the natural world, and an unhealthy organization of it by people. Birney does not attempt to show why this might be, he merely shows what is. There is a suggestion that the enormous creative power of this world is seen as threatening by people. The moon, a traditional female symbol associated with fertility, is seen as a noose; it is threatening (I 51). Furthermore, it is associated with night and darkness makes the visible world less clear. Organizing the natural world into a park, as a stay against the terror, is not an answer to finding a relationship to it either. Also implicit is the criticism that we have so little regard for the natural world that parks have to be established to preserve the wilderness. While in the park we may see animals such as deer or bear, but they are confined and "barred." However, if the artificiality of the park is unhealthy, the world outside it is chaos. Here we may do as we choose, "rifle flowers" or senselessly shoot at them, kill off the wildlife, litter, and cut trees (I 51). And it is proposed that a human world that does this to the natural world eventually turns on itself:

> cut trees cut neighbours
> light fires fire rockets (I 51)

Even the stars will seem to be depleted. This aggressive attitude, which is grounded in fear, and in the attitude that there is no reason to adapt to that which we believe we can control, is a self-perpetuating cycle. We pay to camp with each other, to stay off the fear, and to give comfort. But this is as artificial a brotherhood as is the establishment of a park. This only further isolates us, in fact decreases our understanding, and increases our fear which leads to an arrogant assertion over the unprotected natural world.

Many of the aspects of Birney's view seen in previous poems come together in a single poem, "David," in which the protagonist enters the garden. This is Birney's most widely discussed and closely read poem. Much of the criticism of "David" has concentrated praise on the poetic technique and the dramatic qualities of the plot. The story tends to be seen as some form of rite of passage or education, but because of the action in the conclusion much of the discussion becomes side-tracked into an ethical debate. T. D. MacLulich, in 1976, published an article entitled "Earle Birney's 'David': A Reconsideration" in which he offers a succinct survey of the criticism and a critique which points to the inconsistencies in the two most thorough readings to that date by Richard Robillard and Frank Davey in their books.[41] Since MacLulich's own reconsideration, to which I will return, another close reading and interpretation was published in 1977 by Zailig Pollock and Raymond Jones entitled "The Transformed Vision: Earle Birney's 'David'." Like many critics they see the poem as one of initiation, a character engaged in learning specifically, learning to assume responsibility for oneself, and in this I concur. However they believe:

> Bob's initiation into responsibility involves an initiation into guilt as well. The relationship between guilt and responsibility is one of the central facts of human experience.[42]

They go on to point out that moral responsibility is accompanied by a burden of guilt. Pollock and Jones examine the sun and water imagery closely and much of their reading of this imagery, while not inaccurate, is coloured by the premise of the article: responsibility and guilt are linked.[43] This premise seems to me debatable; it tells more about the character and values of the critics than about the issues in "David." In my view, these issues are clearer when viewed alongside Birney's other work, than when the poem is read as a solitary object. In contrast, MacLulich's reading, although brief, makes several observations that, when placed alongside Birney's own comments about the poem, and the issues in his work I have tried to examine, suggest a poem much less mysterious and contentious in its conclusion.

Before turning to the poem it is informative to consider some of Birney's own comments on "David." As noted, the poem has been widely discussed partly because of its dramatic conclusion, and at length Birney felt compelled to make a statement about it which includes most of the text of The Cow Jumped Over the Moon. He says he was moved in 1940 to write the poem when:

> I was now thirty-six years old. I began to see that it was the passing of my youth I was mourning, which peace would not bring back, not to me nor to any of my generation. I felt a deep need, a compulsion, to express this inevitable change from carefree happiness, this loss that none escapes unless he die young.[44]

This quote suggests, as MacLulich says, a consciousness, on Birney's part, of passing time and a coming to terms with aging, the process of which leads to an awareness of our own mortality, which MacLulich argues is an underlying theme for the poem.[45]

When trying to elucidate more particularly what he wants to express Birney says:

> It was the duality of those Rockies--like the war, both challenging and treacherous--or better, it was the duality of Man I was after. It's not stone that lures and betrays, but man the animal, carrying with him both zest and grief, youth and age, love and hate, life and death. . . . I simply wanted to represent certain realities of life which the climbing of mountains could symbolize.[46]

This statement reinforces the attitude to nature that is presented in "North of Superior." In itself the natural world has no will, it can not betray. A person, however, carrying contradictory social values with him or her into the mountains may betray. Birney's notion of duality, I believe, lends weight to MacLulich's argument (although he argues it differently from me) that David and Bob are dual aspects of the same or one person, the survivor Bob.[47] And lastly the climbing of mountains, Birney says, will represent aspects and realities of life. In other words, it will act as a metaphor for experiences in life.

In order to convey the fundamental ideas Birney chose a story

> . . . about mountains in which the mountains became a character, a personality against whom two youths deliberately matched themselves[48]

This underlines the notion that the climbing of mountains will represent aspects of life. It is not that the mountains themselves are active forces that will willfully attempt to thwart the youths, just that the mountains represent aspects of life. Since the impetus for the poem was to write about the passing of youth Birney chose two

> . . . young men endowed with that intense sensitivity of youth and its capacity for physical joy. And the story was about how they came to the sudden loss of all those endowments through a sort of hubris, an overconfident pride in their ability to win over all their challenges of the other character.[49]

This aspect of youthful pride in the young men's characters, particularly David's, is an important part of the poem. And the ways in which the various themes come together in the poem reveal a complex vision of the natural world for Birney.

The poem begins with a brief portrayal of the human, social world and the natural world. This is the world of work. David and Bob work in the natural world cutting trails. The work alienates them and cuts them off from a creative adaptation to the natural world. The natural world, because of mosquitoes, and the human world, because of its boredom, are both oppressive. David and Bob have no interest in the wrangling poker-filled company of the crew. And, because they are youthful and "had joy in [their] lengthening coltish/ Muscles" they would leave and climb (I 107). In climbing they move into the natural world, now perceived differently. Freed of the social company of the crew they take their own society of two with them. They create a social world built around the physical pleasure of climbing and now, engaged in the pleasurable activity in the natural world, it becomes "sunalive" and no longer oppressive (I 107). Even that which may be oppressive--cold, mists, rain, or ice--is not perceived that way; the young men accept the hardships and accommodate themselves to them. By fishing and picking berries, they partially survive in an integrated way in this world. They move from a life that is not creative into one, it is suggested, that is more creative. Thus this world is seen in a positive way. The world they move into is alive with animal life and the beauty and freshness of the landscape is embedded in the descriptions. They also move into the uncertainties of mountain weather and into ice and snow, but the sun repeatedly melts the ice, warms the air, or makes the landscape bright with light. This view of the landscape is a reflection of the state of mind of David and Bob. It is an exciting time; both meet the physical challenge the climbing offers, and they meet the mental challenge in learning stamina and patience. The weather causes danger and discomfort, and there are reminders of this danger, even reminders of death such as grizzlies, precipitous edges, rockfaces, and ice. But the young men persist and successfully meet these challenges, that is, they make a creative adaptation and thus the natural world is perceived, at its best, as a creative place or a place that can bring out the best in people. This is the equivalent of Birney's "Holiday in the Foothills." The natural world is restorative, joyful, wonderful, alive and beautiful.

But, as quoted earlier, Birney wanted to talk about dualities in people. And if the mountain, as Birney says he tried to make it, symbolizes the challenge of another character in life, then there is a duality of attitude implicit in the view of the mountain. One view is the physical phenomenal view of the mountain that challenges physical and mental endowments. The other view is to see it as a character and as representative of challenges in life, perhaps psychological challenges such as the facing of time, aging, and death. All the mountains in "David" are, at some level, endowed with anthropomorphic imagery: Gleam has "sprawling shoulders," Sundance a "rocky lip." These are accurate physical descriptions as well as images that reinforce the idea of mountains as characters. But it is the Finger, talon-like, that haunts, beckons and provides the greatest challenge and lesson of the summer. When success is won, on a phenomenal level, the world is seen as pleasing; it becomes a reflection of the psychological attitude that accompanies success in life. Just as the mountains express dualities, I think it is also possible to see the two young men as aspects of the same person. David is the extreme physical life-force racing the clock. There is only life or death but nothing in between. Time and aging are held at bay only by success. Bob shares much of this, partly by his assent in learning from David, and partly in an expressed desire and pleasure in climbing. But Bob's is the more sober personality. Though he loves the world of climbing and his successes there, he will settle for compromise. He represents an alternate point of view in his attitude to life and death, and he ultimately faces the knowledge of his own mortality. David and Bob also represent a microcosmic society, and I think, though it is not emphasized, it should be noted that David and Bob climb roped together. This is a fact of life when climbing, but, as I will discuss in greater detail later, it suggests our connectedness to each other, our brotherhood with each other and, at a psychological level, perhaps that David and Bob are one and the same person. Thus the two young men spend a summer facing challenges, physical and psychological.

The element of time is an important factor in the poem. David and Bob are young. Their outlooks are partly a result of their limited experience in life and they are, thus far, incapable of imagining their own mortality. But this is a summer of learning:

> David taught me
> How time on a knife-edge can pass with the guessing of fragments
> Remembered from poets, the naming of strata beside one (I 108)

In other words, patience and caution are beginning to be learned. Physically the situation is dangerous but dwelling on the risks will not help. The outcome will be successful if it is not rushed. They move back into personal time and memory and it proves a source of strength. It shows creative use of the mind and a creative adaptation to the situation. It is not hard to extend these lessons to lessons that deal with life itself. The reference to the strata also implies the cosmic time scale which later when on Inglismaldie Bob says:

> David
> Taught me to read the scroll of coral in limestone
> And the beetle-seal in the shale of ghostly trilobites,
> Letters delivered to man from the Cambrian waves. (I 109)

This reference to cosmic time reminds us, if not David and Bob, that the human time scale is small. And the passage also expresses a continuity; in terms of cosmic time we are all connected and related. But David and Bob remain young men in a hurry; they set a new time for their climb up Sundance (I 109). And at the end it is Bob's recognition that there is insufficient time to bring in rescuers to save David that brings him to his momentous decision. He faces the knowledge that time will pass, none will be spared, not David and not him, and that death will eventually occur.

Birney said he wanted to show the hubris found in the young that also leads to their downfall. David is the one in whom it is most clearly seen. At the outset we are told "mountains for David were made to see over" (I 107). On the one hand it expresses a personality that enjoys a challenge. On the other hand, it implies a certainty and confidence that assumes the challenges were made for him. It hints at a further certainty of repeated success, which in reality may not be true. But David remains confident, too confident. He takes an enormous personal risk climbing Sundance:

> At an outthrust we baulked
> Till David slung with his left to a dint in the scarp,
>
> Lobbed the iceaxe over the rocky lip,
> Slipped from his holds and hung by the quivering pick,
> Twisted his long legs up into space and kicked
> To the crest. (I 109)

David grins, pleased with himself, as he pulls Bob up and it is because of this a new time for the climb was set. This shows a confidence that leads to the taking of foolish risks. There is also a kind of hubris in the building of the cairn. It is a traditional practice among climbers and in many respects is a quiet insistence or assertion of the success of small, tiny humans physically succeeding in climbing the enormous physical barrier a mountain presents. It is also a tribute to the elation and pleasure felt by climbers and only understood by climbers. Yet at some level it is a futile gesture. It is only a human mark. It cannot and does not hold any meaning when placed alongside the natural world and only human pride could think otherwise. It is at their moment of greatest triumph, the successful climbing of the unmapped Finger, that they foolishly unrope to build the cairn and grow careless. Only overconfidence grounded in their _hubris_ could lead them to do so on so small a ledge.

There are two instances, in the foreshadowing death images, where David's _hubris_ is shown or implied. These images, tied to David, also show aspects of David and Bob's personalities that point to differences between them. Bob tells us:

> That day we chanced on the skull and the splayed white ribs
> Of a mountain goat underneath a cliff-face, caught
> On a rock. Around were the silken feathers of hawks.
> And that was the first I knew that a goat could slip. (I 108)

This time it is Bob who notices, not David pointing out as a teacher. The parallels between the goat and David after his fall have often been noted by critics. There is the repetition of the word "splayed," and both David and the goat are caught on a rock. It is significant that Bob notices and recognizes the death; it shows a willingness to acknowledge it. There is something of wonder in his tone at the knowledge that an animal equipped by nature for mountain ledges could slip. But David and Bob's imaginations can not yet see the lesson implicit in the bones: the creative processes in the world have limitations. Only the hawk, signified by the feathers, which later reappears to hover over David's accident, can fly. Nature has equipped it to fly. Thus if a goat, equipped for mountain travel, is vulnerable, humans are that much more so. We too have physical limits. Through various inventions of our own creative fashioning we may be able to stretch those limits, but we should not lose sight of the fact that to do so is dangerous, possibly fatal.

The second instance that demonstrates personality differences and implies *hubris* concerns the incident with the robin (I 109). Again the foreshadowing between its death and David's has been noted by critics. The robin, which has a broken wing, if left alone will die. Bob would like to keep it to tame it. In this desire he represents some of the possibilities of human ingenuity. We are thinking creatures capable of mending ourselves and others. The results are not always perfect but the sustenance of life is held as the highest value. Bob's reaction represents a good quality in many humans: the impulse to nurture. The incident nonetheless involves a dilemma since in the case of the robin, it would, if it survived, lead an unnatural life. It shows a willingness to compromise on Bob's part. The question implicit in the incident is: 'Is a partial or compromised life better than no life?' David answers no, both here and unequivocally at the conclusion. Death is preferable. This all-or-nothing attitude is rooted in his own *hubris*, and it prevents him from imagining any life other than one of winning every challenge. If he can't win totally he will not win at all.

The description of the ascent up the chimney is almost like a birth, which culminates with David and Bob's emergence out on to the Finger (I 110). David and Bob build their carin but they have unroped. Bob, moving carelessly on to the tip, loses his footing and David falls as he puts out a hand to steady him. Bob descends to him, David asks to be pushed over, Bob realizes the inevitability of David's death, he admits it is he who has not tested his holds, and at length consents to push David to immediate death. Throughout this the natural world has, of course, been unaltered by this drama. The hawk flies as a reminder to human physical limits, but gradually Bob's perception of the landscape alters. Now the sun chills. And after he has pushed David over and he descends the mountain the landscape becomes fearful and menacing. Again, this is Bob's perception of it. As Birney says:

> [After the accident] I could picture . . . the horror of the return; every detail the same, so far as nature was concerned, but looking entirely different now, from the viewpoint of the shocked, lonely, desperate survivor. (emphasis mine)[50]

In other words the landscape now reflects Bob's psychological state. On the ledge with David he has faced death. In the exuberance of success, the marking of it with a carin, they have unroped, not only physically but spiritually. In the flush of their pride they have forgotten they are tied, or should be, to each other. Roping is a symbol of a recognition of brotherhood between them and this is necessary for a creative accommodation. They need each other to help each other and the moment they have forgotten this they have become careless and David falls. When David falls and dies part of Bob's self dies too. Now he must look death in the face, recognize his *hubris* and purge it. But looking at death also reminds him of his essential aloneness, which is the reason we need each other. It is the looking at this aloneness that causes such fear in Bob. Death and our aloneness represent chaos, darkness and danger, and his flight from the mountain makes him fearful of being stalked by "It." "It" is the death and aloneness. Thus the natural world and mountains, while being a symbol of life in the form of challenges met, is also a place of chaos, danger, and death which are also found in life. In life we often find ourselves balanced on knife edges, that is why we need to be roped to each other. As Birney said, ". . . it is not stone that lures and betrays," we betray ourselves and each other. The natural world, however, remains incurious

> Around the marks of that day on the ledge of the Finger,
> That day, the last of my youth, on the last of our mountains.
> (I 113)

In "David" Birney's vision of the natural world is complex. It may act as a metaphor for life, or it may reflect a psychological state on the part of a participant there. People's relationship to it is now also more complex. A harmonious relationship usually signifies a person creatively involved in both the natural and human world. Destructive or non-creative activity usually signifies a person alienated from both worlds. This may be a self-perpetuating cycle in which alienation from, and fear of, the natural world causes destructive activity in the human world, and vice versa. Or it may be a temporary state in which, because of momentary lapses in creative activity, the resultant confrontation of this condition leads to a perception of the natural world as threatening. Thus the natural world now reflects a psychological state. A poem this may be seen in is "Vancouver Lights." The poet is in the garden and contemplates, at night, Vancouver from Grouse mountain. Birney views it from the vantage of height similar to his vantage in "North Star West." The first stanza describes the scene, a peaceful description where the natural and man-made worlds co-exist. But as he contemplates further his thoughts move out into the world, at war, and inward to consider human behavior. He concentrates on light and dark contrasts in this poem. He says:

> Through the feckless years we have come to the time
> when to look on this quilt of lamps is a troubling delight
> (I 71)

Light represents knowledge, truth, progress, the best that has been creative to people. But now, even to this "winking outpost" of Vancouver comes "primal ink" (I 71). This is the darkness of war and knowing this makes the scene a "troubling delight." But darkness also represents chaos, emptiness, that which is non-creative. Sitting on the mountain Birney is keenly aware of the smallness of the human race and with this awareness, he feels the primal terror at the knowledge that in the vastness of our solar universe there is nothing. It is the awareness of the essential aloneness of us all, such as Bob felt in "David." He is conscious of the darkness, our aloneness and of chaos and death. But in the midst of this we are a spark. A spark is not much; it signifies potential, but it could as easily go out especially as it is "beleaguered/ by darkness" (I 72). Nonetheless, we do make a twinkle in this darkness, this "emptiness," yet we fear we will always be alone, always be in darkness. Even Phoebus, the God of Light of our invention, makes no mark. Our light is trivial. Yet, Birney insists, we must assert ourselves; we must speak. Tiny as we are, we are unique and we have found ways to bring light into our lives, to be creative and this has been done by our own will, and alone. However, he continues, should we be defeated by the "murk," that is, should we destroy ourselves, we must find a way to leave a message to those that may survive. The message is that we made the light ourselves but it was also our unmaking. There was no natural disaster that destroyed us, but "we contrived the power the blast that snuffed us" (I 72). Traditionally we fashion legends for ourselves such as the Prometheus legend which tells how Prometheus gave mortals fire and was punished by Zeus. But Birney says no. We found fire and fashioned its uses by our own ingenuity and thus we bound ourselves. Should there be a "beast in the stretching night" we must say "there was light" (I 72).

Robillard says of this poem:

> . . . nature is black chaos, and man is Prometheus the light-giver. . . . there is implied a need for man to respect nature's processes, and, at the same time, a need for heroic struggle against the lack of human reference in nature.[51]
>
> The image of man as demi-god, as Prometheus struggling against the darkness of nature, admits into Birney's poetry an understanding of the hero's attempt to create a human world, a world whose myths can establish man's place in nature and relate man to man.[52]

It is not that nature itself is "black chaos"; Birney has shown it has no meaning, but it has order. Nature, the solar universe, is used to evoke the chaos we ourselves have created. And like Robillard, Jones too sees Birney as ". . . ally[ing] himself with Promethean man and throw[ing] his defiance in the face of a malevolent universe."[53] He quotes the final stanza then says: "Yet to have outwitted Leviathan by destroying oneself is a dubious virtue indeed, though one consistent with Birney's frequently sardonic view of man."[54] However, it is not the universe that is malevolent, it is we who create malevolence and it is Birney's expression of despair over this, not cynicism, that finds such dark expression in the poem. By using Prometheus Birney is not advocating a mythology to establish "man's place in nature and relate man to man" because he places responsibility back on Prometheus. Creation of myths avoids a confrontation with reality, often distorts reality in order to assuage the truth or knowledge this reality conveys. The poem is Birney's plea for a constructive creative life, not one of darkness which means war and self-destruction. We can not place blame elsewhere. We live in a world that is part of a larger, orderly but rational world. It is our own destructive irrationality that could plunge us into darkness. We need not myths, but each other, the comfort of each other, against the larger darkness, but only creative action can accomplish this.

There are a few poems that tie together his ideas about the necessity to see each other as having a common past and acting in a constructive creative way. The garden now becomes a reflection of the poet's mind, as well as a description of this world in itself. The positive and negative, rational and irrational, dark and light play back and forth in rich expression.

"Man is a Snow" is a bleak poem in which Birney attempts to show humanity at its darkest. Our essence, he says, is not found in the shooting of a cougar or the killing of a tree although we use technology to do both. It is in the endless repetitious and self-perpetuating lies we tell to justify our activities, such as turning the technology against each other to kill off our young, those with the most potential. Nor is our essence in the prairie grass, dead due to our necessity to farm, but it is in the willful waste and hoarding of the products we raise. Not even in the fouled rivers can our worst be seen, it is instead, in ourselves, in our very blood. We have the capacity to be so cold that our chill will penetrate and crack deep into the heart of a tree, deep into its source of life (I 101). By extension we do this to each other. This chill destroys. We "winter" our hearts, lock them in cabins until we are so chilled the very nails shrink and "pistol" the air. We are capable of such levels of ignorance and ignoring that we radiate death, permeating the "brittle" air with it (I 191). And eventually we are left with only the frost formation on the window that looks like ferns. This frost formation "unfurls on the darkening window" (I 101). This is all that can happen, a cold image that is the measure of the level of our coldness. The world is dark, chaotic, black and uncreative. But these ferns are also reminders of "the world that is lost" (I 101). They are reminders of the natural world, a place where death is not wasteful, but part of a rational process. They are also reminders of beauty and a sweeter, better place. They stand for a human world where life is lived more humanely and creatively, and with continuity, since ferns also are one of the most ancient of plants. The ferns are perhaps Birney's hope against hope. They appear and are reminders, possibly they will be a stay against the dark. But the optimism is meagre, since only the mention of the world lost gives us pause, and they form on a "darkening window." In this poem the natural world has become icy and cold, and this natural world also represents our world, our essence, and reflects Birney's despair over this human condition.

The companion poem ". . . Or a Wind" looks to humanity's potential. Now humanity is likened to a wind blowing around the landscape. The features of the landscape, like the mountains in "David," are challenges. Sometimes we doubt ourselves, even "dissipate," but the natural world is rejuvenative and breathes new energy into us. It allows us to continue, to explore, that is, be creative. The natural processes found in nature, erosion by wind and water, are now natural creative processes for us as we meet life's challenges. We now batter "the bright rock with the hail of our will" (I 101). The use of "hail" is a pun; it is a greeting, as well as frozen rain, but it puns "hale" which also suggests something robust and healthy in the use of the human will. It implies the method of meeting challenges will be natural or at least not mean. The use of human will will be creative. He offers the hope: "O we may yet roar free," and in his description of this freedom there is a kind of celebration of the wind's power and joy (I 102). It dances and leaps through the natural world doing all the natural things a wind does. It is "the great wind of humanity blowing free blowing through/ streaming over the future" (I 102). It suggests that people have the potential to act differently. Like the natural world they may be creative and in doing so free themselves and determine their own future. Now, as Birney feels greater hope and extends a wish for a happier future, the natural world reflects this state of mind and is filled with robust energy and optimistic imagery.

The poem "Biography" outlines a person's career. It is a journey through life in which the person becomes lost, is defeated by life itself because he has forgotten his early lessons on how to live creatively. Again the natural world acts both for itself and for life. The boy, at ten, leaves his own small mark on the world and his tracks fill with pine-needles (I 144). It is an innocent but creative existence in which there is interaction with nature. As he grows older he grows taller and has a greater perspective on the world. He meets natural challenges when he balances on ridges. Like David and Bob he takes risks and wins the challenges. At twenty the lake is a teacher, a book to learn from and he "riffled its pages for rainbow" (I 144). Rainbow are a trout, and he learns to live harmoniously and creatively both in and from nature. These are lessons of balance for life in general. But a rainbow is also the refraction of light, all light, broken down, and traditionally, in a literary sense, light is also associated with truth. The line also suggests the young man is seeking answers to questions, or a truth. And, for awhile, life is sunny and only darkness dies at dawn (I 144). This suggests that the man has learned some pleasures and lessons but the inevitability of death, and the confrontation of darkness are not one. He "peers" at the peaks, which are his successes but the use of the word "peers" suggests that he is still looking and searching. It does not suggest clear vision. When he looks at the peaks the veins are blackened and "white pulses of waterfalls/ beat in the bare rockflesh" (I 144). These images suggest aging and by forty years there is now only one peak in his life, the nunatak, and this icy image is likened to a sundial. Time is relentlessly passing. The snow represents the loneliness and coldness of the meaning this holds, that we all age and die. The man is alone, on top of mountain heights and the wind blows around him. When he turns, perhaps to return to humanity, and society he has lost his will. He has lost the knowledge the lake offered, or possibly his "nerve" indicating the optimism and confidence he had then (I 145). But this loss of will and nerve occurs when you disconnect yourself. At the end he knows about death but he is ill-equipped to reconcile himself to it and dies, alone. It may be that Birney intended, that at the moment the man realizes his own mortality, the man surrenders to that truth, since he says he "tried without might" (I 145). But there is also the implication, in the icy and lonely imagery, that simply climbing the peaks is not enough. We must stay engaged by the world since we are all connected to each other and we can help and comfort each other in spite of the elemental realities of life and death. At the moment the climb and the successes become the ends in themselves a creative participation in life, such as is represented by his youthful involvement in nature, is lost.

In The Creative Writer Birney describes the process by which he came to write "Bushed."[55] The poem is based partly on memory and partly on imagination, and describes an old trapper living alone by a lake who becomes bushed. He goes mad with the solitary life he leads when he begins to perceive the natural world as threatening. It is a gradual process. In the beginning the trapper has "invented a rainbow," that is, a truth or body of knowledge to sustain him (I 160). But this has not been enough, just as the myths in "North of Superior" ultimately do not explain anything or hold any meaning about the landscape. The trapper has managed to live in an integrated way in the natural world:

> he built a shack on the shore
> learned to roast porcupine belly and
> wore the quills on his hatband (I 160)

But this has not been enough either. At first, whatever the weather, he is out in nature but he begins to perceive the mountain as alive, that it

> sent messages whizzing down every hot morning
> boomed proclamations at noon and spread out
> a white guard of goat
> before falling asleep on its feet at sundown (I 160)

The trapper instead tries waiting until night to be outside, but he is only moving, psychologically, into greater darkness and the forest too threatens until eventually he believes "though the mountain slept the winds/ were shaping its peak into an arrowhead/ poised" (I 160). Now he can only "bar himself in and wait/ for the great flint to come singing into his heart" (I 160).

The natural world, in this poem, has become representative of the state of the trapper's mind. It is caught in chaos and darkness and as a result he sees the exterior world as threatening. Birney has said that the poem:

> . . . also perhaps reveals something about how my own mind would go, if I were no longer able to shape its schizophrenic moments into an amulet of words.[56]

The trapper's madness represents a loss of creativity, or creative accommodation to life. This is chaos or darkness, a spiritual death that will result in physical death as happened in "David." The poem also suggests that, for all Birney's emphasis on the importance of an inclusion of the natural world in our lives, human needs are also unique and greater than just a cabin in nature. Just as it can rain for ten weeks on Eagle Island and life in nature may become oppressive, here too there is danger of being oppressed by the natural world, or life. It implies the necessity of the other quality Birney values so highly: brotherhood. He says of "Bushed":

> . . . if the poem itself has, in any way, made you feel more understanding, more tolerant, of my old mad trapper in his cabin--if it has in any way "universalized" him, brought him and you and me into some community of sharing of the mysterious human condition, however briefly--then it serves in still another, and important capacity, for you. For me it had already served when it purged me of yet one more of the fearful ghosts of my separateness.[57]

But, as with a number of Birney's other poems "Bushed" has been seen as presenting a view of nature that demonstrates an inherent malevolence. In discussing "Takakkaw Falls" earlier Pacey's comment that "Bushed" shows "nature's destructive violence" was noted.[58] Aichinger accepts Northrop Frye's assessment that:

> ". . . the outstanding achievement of Canadian poetry is in the evocation of stark terror. . . . a controlled vision of the causes of cowardice. . . . [that nature has the power] to waste and destroy on a superhuman scale."[59]

This comment Aichinger feels sums up the essence of "Bushed" among other poems. He believes the malignancy that he feels is described in nature is a projection of fear and guilt on the part of the trapper, but he does not show where this guilt occurs in the poem. Frank Davey is more flippant. He says:

> It would seem, however, that Birney himself is often "bushed," that like this man of whom he writes, he sees nature not only as impartial and inexorable but as animate and willful. Birney's love of myth and story would seem to triumph over his Marxist scepticism and lead him to fabricate his own myth with which to invest our "heavenless air."[60]

Birney has been clear that he does not regard nature as having any inherent will as all the above comments say or imply. This attitude suggests there must be other issues involved in these poems but the critics are unable to illuminate these issues in their effort instead to find mythic meaning, and the scholarly Dr. Birney has co-operated by including traditional literary mythic references in some poems. But mythic references in a poem do not a mythic poem make, rather they make a literary poet. This kind of thinking leads to such statements as Aichinger's when he says:

> The evocation of verdant peace in "Slug in Woods" suggests that Birney holds an affection for this lowly creature who is "himself his viscid wife," that he does not extend to mankind, just as his sympathy seems to lie with the gruff old ogre of a mountain in "Bushed" rather than with the loony trapper who invades the mountain's demesne.[61]

In view of the poems previously examined it seems remarkable that a critic could suggest that Birney lacks sympathy with humanity. Birney is often critical of, or frustrated by peoples' attitudes, but he believes

> there is man still to be sung about as well as howled at, man to be hammered and cajoled into being mankind. And there is all life, waiting to flow. November trees in Canada are bare and icy, but we know the old earth under them waits and stores and renews her power to send the juice of creation sprouting up into April leaves.[62]

This statement does not bespeak a poet out of sympathy with his fellowmen, but one who urges that living a constructive, creative life is all important, but that it can not exist without an awareness of our connectedness to each other and, by extension, to the natural world. This is the "news of the universe" that Birney brings. Birney's beliefs are not mutually exclusive, but are, as he has shown in his poems, the twin qualities which help us to face the unavoidable realities of the human condition, and by which we may assert "our belief in a human future too wonderful to name."[63]

CHAPTER III

WILLIAM STAFFORD

"'Your job is to find what the world is trying to be'."

"Vocation"
William Stafford

If Earle Birney is like an old tree rooted to the landscape, William Stafford is an "Earth Dweller," in the deepest and richest sense. He believes that

> . . . somewhere inside, the clods are
> vaulted mansions, lines through the barn sing
> for the saints forever, the shed and windmill
> rear so glorious the sun shudders like a gong.[1]

He is confident this knowledge infuses all life, material and spiritual, and in particular common everyday objects and events. He understands why people worship. The natural and the everyday world inform most of Stafford's poetry through theme and language. He celebrates it, fears for it, and attempts to penetrate the central meaning and importance it holds for him and for us. Stafford endeavours to show the interdependence of the earth's animate and inanimate elements. The "news of the universe" he brings to us is that

> . . . the world speaks.
> The world speaks everything to us.
> It is our only friend. (CP 196)

As it is for Birney, the garden for Stafford is the wilderness. It is a world he celebrates and respects, but he also believes that below its known, phenomenal level there is a dark, unknown quality that he attempts to describe. When the machine enters this garden Stafford describes the disruption it causes. He also tries to show how technology comes between us and the natural world, which has the effect of distancing us, and like Birney, he fears a consequence of this could be our own self-destruction. Finally, when he enters the garden he moves into a middle ground. He journeys there metaphorically and these journeys become simultaneous descriptions of his experiences in the natural world, and of a journey into the self. As in the previous chapter, before proceeding to an examination of the poems, I shall briefly survey Stafford and the critics, and then examine several recurring issues that underlie Stafford's work.

Over the years Stafford's work has been read with greater care and consideration than Birney's and important groundwork illuminating recurring themes and techniques has been done. A critic can not discuss Stafford's poems without holding some opinion about Stafford's attitude to the landscape, but most often his work is approached from the point of view of technique or poetics. The critic will use metaphor, language, style or mythology as the method to examine the poetry. Short essays by Richard Hugo and John Lauber pay more direct attention to Stafford's attitude to and use of the landscape, but as yet nobody has made a lengthy investigation that focuses solely on this aspect of his work. It is from this point of view that I have tried to proceed. In doing so I have found that, in general, I agree with much of the criticism and it has been useful in thinking about Stafford and landscape. My survey is brief; I examine the books or portions of books written on Stafford and selected critical essays that draw attention to pivotal themes or techniques. In the discussion of the poems I will refer to specific points made by critics, not included in the survey, about the particular poem under examination.

In general, criticism of Stafford's work is favourable. His careful craftsmanship in his best poems is admired and two critics, William Heyen in a 1970 article "William Stafford's Allegiances," and Linda Wagner in a 1975 article "William Stafford's Plain-Style," draw attention to technical aspects of the poems.[2] Other critics also make reference to Stafford's style and technique, but in the bulk of the criticism, which overs a ten-year period, a shift can be seen as it advances through the decade, and the critics move beyond admiration of his external descriptions to include some analysis of a relationship Stafford attempts to define between the external world and humanity.

J. Russell Roberts, in a 1968 article entitled "Listening to the Wilderness With William Stafford," examines the importance of "listening" in Stafford's poems. He says:

> Again and again in Stafford's poetry we hear the wilderness; though it utters no word to him, he feels its presence with eyes and ears specially attuned by sympathies, inherent and learned.[3]

Roberts shows how Stafford raises questions or engages paradoxes to examine our relationship to the natural world. In a 1974 article entitled "World's Guest--William Stafford," John Lauber describes Stafford's stance as a "piety toward the earth itself, toward the region, the home, the parents, toward one's total past."[4] He notes Stafford's use of contrasts and argues that by engaging contrast Stafford opens himself to all sides of life. Piety toward the earth extends to piety toward himself and, although Lauber does not say so, Stafford's attitude suggests an attitude for ourselves.[5]

In 1970 Richard Hugo wrote an article, "Problems with Landscapes in Early Stafford Poems," which makes an important point. Hugo argues that there is a difference between the rendering of an external landscape and an internal landscape. The internal landscape, Hugo believes, "is where the poem is, . . . [an] obsessive quality of emotional ownership."[6] Hugo is trying to show that in the best Stafford poems there is a delicate balance between an accurate physical or external description (the personal perception of which is the internal landscape), and a personal set of values which constitutes a point of view and accounts for recurring themes or attitudes to the content.[7]

There are two articles which complement each other and are particularly useful when studying Stafford's work. The first is by George Lensing, called "William Stafford, Mythmaker" published in 1975. Lensing argues that Stafford is a mythmaker, not in the traditional literary sense, but through his exploration of the natural world in his poetry where "the poet sets out to discover new 'patterns' and 'reverberations' which speak with . . . universal urgency."[8] Lensing tries to show that this operates through an integration of connections between, for example, Stafford's past and present landscapes, inner and outer worlds, or surfaces and undersurfaces.[9] Many of Lensing's arguments are strengthened or clarified in the second article by Dennis Daley Lynch, published in 1976 and called "Journeys in Search of Oneself: The Metaphor of the Road in William Stafford's Traveling Through the Dark and The Rescued Year." Lynch explores the use of road metaphors, which he sees as an expression of journeys into the past, present, or future. These journeys, often into the natural world, may take the form of remembrances, expressions of experience, or quests. Lynch does not see these divisions as mutually exclusive but rather as inter-connected experiences that lead to self-reconciliation and regeneration.[10]

In addition to the articles two books have been published which consider Stafford's work. In 1976 Jonathan Holden published The Mark to Turn: A Reading of William Stafford's Poetry. He expresses the purpose of the book this way:

> By examining elements of Stafford's symbolic vocabulary, I would like to demonstrate that his poems do more than [resonate]: they exhibit, in a tremendously compressed form, a coherent moral vision of the world.[11]

Holden's book is useful simply because he traces the accumulated meaning of specific and recurring words, which illuminates some of the different ways that the natural world is used. Many of his comments on Stafford's use of the natural world are valuable.

The second book to include a consideration of Stafford's work is by George Lensing and Ronald Moran: Four Poets of the Emotive Imagination: Robert Bly, James Wright, Louis Simpson and William Stafford. Stafford, they feel, was a poet of the emotive imagination before it was a concept widely defined or discussed.[12] Much of the aforementioned article by George Lensing is a synthesis of the chapter on Stafford in this book. Although the purpose of the chapter is to show the quality of the emotive imagination in Stafford's poetry, Lensing and Moran also have some useful observations to make about Stafford's use of the natural world, and I shall return to them later.

As in Birney's work, there are underlying ideas in Stafford's work which are both a motivation to write and a foundation of thought for the expression of his ideas. Writing for Stafford is a process in technique and discovery.[13] To write is to make a journey, most often into the natural world, which raises the question of why Stafford writes poetry and why the natural world is central to his writing. In a preface to a review, "At Home on Earth" in The Hudson Review, Stafford writes:

> We hear each other, but we do not hear the world. Outside our councils the world is beginning to speak. It will never finish; no person can interpret it fully. But it is there, and that it has something urgent to say, we are beginning to be convinced. . . . In the world where what is outside man extends into mystery, awe, worship, respect, reverence--poetry, the stance that accepts, may be salvational. The psyche may depend on limitation, recurrence, stability, as do organic processes. The disruption of feeling for purposes of gain may endanger a balance the individual has to have, a stability that cannot change at the pace needed for intellectual accommodation of a runaway environment.[14]

These thoughts express the assumption that there are two worlds: the world of "each other" and "the world." He suggests there is something of import to be sought and found in that other world, "the world." Stafford is not certain, but he implies that poetry may be the medium by which we both save and protect ourselves. It allows what he calls a "stance" or attitude that is receptive to that which is outside us and therefore may be mysterious, awesome, or invoke worship or reverence. Poetry is a path to the world. He also suggests that psychic needs can not be separated from physical needs, that they too may have limitations that require stability and some cyclic recurrences for their survival. A disruption of this, motivated by gain, which may be material or intellectual gain associated with pride or control, may be dangerous in that it robs us of the necessary time needed to accommodate and balance ourselves to change.

Stafford's comments bespeak a conviction that the natural world may hold lessons for human behavior. Jonathan Holden argues:

> . . . the natural landscape exhibits, for Stafford, a "justice." In its Latin sense, the word "just" means "fitting." "Justice," then, suggests fittingness . . . a propriety which stands as an implicit lesson for human beings to follow.[15]

Holden further argues that an "imaginative use of Nature as an emblem of propriety, as a model for 'salvation,' is a major theme in Stafford's poetry."[16] Stafford's conviction suggests, as does his method of writing, that possibly through poetry something useful to us may be discovered.

Thus the act of writing poetry and the engagement with the natural world are conscious decisions by Stafford and are inter-related. The fusion of these decisions is what George Lensing sees as a mythic quality in Stafford's work which he defines this way:

> The mythmaking of the poet does not consist in the recasting of those characters and episodes which have become permanent endowments of the Western psyche. Instead, the poet set out to discover new "patterns" and "reverberations" which speak with the same universal urgency.[17]

Stafford, too, has been more specific in what he is seeking or what it is "the world" is speaking. In an interview called "Keeping the Lines Wet" he addresses the question of myths or patterns in his work. He says:

> "I don't have any sense of larger purposes, just little immediate encounters. Beyond this, of course, aside from language there is a kind of resonance among our experiences. The key word might be myth. Every now and then we find ourselves encountering some story or pattern that wields more power over us than we would expect. . . . But as a writer it's too abrupt and cheap of me to think that my job is to take a pattern that Sophocles found and drape what I write around it. Instead of that, I would like to stumble on something new as Sophocles did. Of course, such patterns are rare, I realize."[18]

His search for these patterns is part of his method of working, he has ". . . [a] willing acceptance of sub-ideas . . . engaging in an activity out of which things come."[19] He believes these patterns are found in "'the influences on us all the time--gravity, wind, time, the immediacy of near things and the farness of far things--everything that touches you'."[20] In allowing images and ideas to rise up and recur there exists the possibility of mythic revelation or patterns to surface. These patterns are the connections he looks for between the natural world and humanity, and he looks to the landscape as the touchstone for this search. And, as in Birney, the natural world expresses a psychological state, this time a journey into the self, as part of the intuitive search for patterns that can be articulated. The purpose of the search may be salvational.

This search, or the process of discovery or discernment, often takes the form of a metaphoric journey. The journeys Stafford makes are, most frequently, into the natural world, although sometimes he will journey into the landscape created by the industrial world. It was previously noted that Dennis Daly Lynch traces the metaphor of the road and journeying in his article. He sees Stafford journeying into the past, present, and future observing, questioning and seeking. Lensing and Moran see more than just road metaphors. They find horizontal connections in the form of trails, paths, rivers, telephone wires on which journeys take place.[21] Lynch sees these journeys as personal journeys, part of a process of self-discovery and the connectives and levels of meaning represent a psychological state as well as the expression of a phenomenal world. Stafford, like Birney, writes with the full knowledge of people's alienation from each other and the natural world, and his purpose is to attempt to bridge this gap. Also as with Birney, for him the first step is creativity or the act of writing poetry. For Birney the natural world is a model of creativity, for Stafford it is an "emblem of propriety" that may be salvational. And finally, just as Birney believes in the importance of brotherhood, Stafford says that he is interested in poetry that makes people "converge" rather than making them choose sides.[22]

In making these journeys both into personal memory and imagination, and into the larger world Stafford, like Birney, voyages into a self-created garden. Once there he reaffirms its existence, expresses fear about its possible continuance, or, in his richest poems, tries to seek out the elemental connections that unite us and the natural world. The garden, for Stafford, is the landscape he finds himself living in, a landscape which may not be identical to our own in a particular sense, but which, nonetheless, holds potential experiences and lessons appropriate to any sensitive response to the natural world. Although Stafford is capable of good description of the external world his poems, in general, have a more sombre tone than Birney's, and any celebration of the physical world is most often embedded in the poem along with other purposes. However, like Birney, Stafford establishes a garden that is the beginning of a middle ground. It is not an idyllic place; Stafford is fully aware of the realities and dangers found there, but it is a place where he begins to define for us the ways in which it may be an "emblem of propriety." He shows us ways in which we may seek out the patterns the natural world holds. In general, like Birney, he begins to awaken in us ways of approaching the natural world; he points toward a stance we may share which in turn means holding the garden as a model.

Although he is less emphatic about it than Birney, Stafford knows that the processes of the natural world continue and endure without human presence or intervention. In fact, he knows our presence may be quickly erased by these processes. Stafford is, however, no less appreciative of how remarkable and awesome the natural world is in its enormity and capacity for endurance. He describes this in "Things That Happen Where There Aren't Any People." He says: "It's cold on Lakeside Road/ with no one traveling" (TTH 25). It may be that because it is cold there are no travellers, or without travellers the place seems cold. The only traveller is the rain that beats down on "its victim," an old sign that has fallen to the ground. The unspoken comment is that when people depart what they leave behind is soon overwhelmed by the natural elements and processes. He tells us there need not be people when sun falls on rock or it is gloomy since,

> Plenty of
> things happen in deserted places, maybe
> dust counting millions of its little worlds
> or the slow arrival of deep dark.
>
> And out there in the country a rock has been
> waiting to be mentioned for thousands of years. (TTH 25)

This is a world that suggests an eternal evolving and patient quality, and we are not necessary to the eternal rhythms. The rock sits, waiting, and daily its shadow leans, crouches "then walks away eastward in one measured stride/ exactly right for its way of being" (TTH 25). The idea that the shadow moves in a way that is precisely right for it suggests Holden's notion about propriety. There is no excess in this process, it simply "is" and happens perfectly each day, and without human intervention. Stafford concludes:

> To reach
> for that rock we have the same reasons
> that explorers always have for their journeys:
> because it is far, because there aren't any people. (TTH 25)

The word "far" is important in Stafford's vocabulary. In part "far" represents the natural world as an "other place" from which we are distanced, but which holds lessons or patterns from which we may learn. Holden argues that, in addition to its literal significance, "Stafford is also consciously using ['far'] as a metaphor for 'different,' to express his sense of Nature's extreme otherness."[23] Holden feels that in invoking "far" Stafford brings forward a dark and unknown place, because it is not present, and invites the imagination into action.[24] Holden also argues that when "far" is associated with coldness it is also linked with death, and personal death can only be imagined. Hence the ultimate emblem for nature's otherness is human mortality.[25] The otherness is invisible but is activated imaginatively. In the poem on the cold road rain beats on the victim sign and there is the slow arrival of deep dark. Death is part of the cycles. The conclusion then may, on one level, read that human behavior is motivated by curiosity and challenge, but journeys have greater meaning than this to Stafford. It is, after all, the rock that is being sought; it holds meaning and is part of an eternal cycle where things happen "exactly right for its way of being" (TTH 25). The lines may suggest the journey to the rock is to find this out, and that this may be a solitary activity. If this is the motivation for the journey then the natural world, represented by the rock, becomes an "emblem of propriety" for human knowledge. However, we may also make an imaginative journey into the far, the unknown, and what we will learn is the lesson of human mortality and this indeed is a lonely journey. On an imaginative plane the natural world also may be a model which enables us to recognize important facts about the human condition. This then is Stafford's garden. He does not project or impose human values, rather he recognizes what is there and attempts to discern what instead he can receive or recognize there.

Stafford, like Birney, is aware of a time scale in the natural world that is longer than the human scale. The short joyful poem, "B.C.," celebrates this. Stafford says, "The seed that met water spoke a little name" (CP 76). He tells us all this happened "before Jesus, before Rome; that other air/ was readying our hundreds of years to say things" (CP 76). What the seed speaks is "'Sequoia is my name'" (CP 76). Stafford is expressing pleasure in the knowledge that the natural world continues without human intervention.

A more serious poem, "A History of Tomorrow," considers this past, while simultaneously implying future history. Stafford establishes a quarrel between stones and waves. He says:

> It is the stones, they say, that began
> the quarrel, tripping the waves--imagine
> that struggle for years. (TTH 27)

The water persists, however, fighting back and eroding the stones, breaking them up until only sand is left. But, Stafford says, the waves forget that even after the sand is broken down, finer and finer, there are still millions of little stones left which quietly drift and float away. He says for years,

> at the bottom of the ocean those tiny children
> of the stones have been huddling together, still,
> heavy, into one big rock so deep
> the waves don't know it. . . . (TTH 27)

In the eternal cyclic processes of erosion and build-up the sand is being pressed and is forming into a new rock. This is what the waves don't know; instead they continue to batter "the rocks that look big" (TTH 27). Stafford concludes: "The big one waits" (TTH 27). The big rock waits patiently for the processes that will push it again to the surface and begin the process of erosion once more. These cycles continue slowly and repetitiously and without human intervention. The title suggests there is a connection between past and future; what has and is happening affects future events. In reading the poem there is the possibility of seeing humanity aligned with either the stones or waves, but each interpretation points to a different conclusion. If people are aligned with the stones we may be seen as part of the natural order with a capacity for endurance which suggests a common thread or bond between us, in spite of diversity. This reading also implies the hope for the endurance of the species. Thus in the past diversity and multiplicity point toward a common and unified future. If, however, people are aligned to the waves, the reading suggests that we resist knowledge and acceptance of our place in the natural order represented by the stone(s). We mindlessly quarrel with the natural order learning nothing in our resistance. This interpretation puts an ominous tone on the conclusion. It might simply mean that nature will quietly endure and continue the natural processes. Or it might mean the processes of the natural world are so relentless that it is futile to try to be more than part of the processes, since in doing so we will be defeated by them. This latter interpretation suggests itself because of Stafford's use of the term "big one" which sometimes in common parlance refers to an atomic bomb. This reading suggests that in quarrelling with nature we are trying to control or defeat it. Now nature, represented by the rock, awaits our destiny. We may destroy ourselves by tampering with natural elements or we may draw back from this, but in either case nature's role is passive because there is no intervention. This is a more pessimistic interpretation that points to a future history full of peril. The underlying description, that in a sense celebrates the long slow calendar of natural history, points to Stafford's idea that we too need time in order to achieve stability.

Much as he admires the processes of the natural world, Stafford is clearly aware that the natural world is not idyllic. It can be dangerous and arbitrary. "Chickens the Weasel Killed" and "With One Launched Look" remind us of the natural life-death cycle and our own mortality, Mysterious and unfathomable as the natural world may be, these poems show that Stafford understands the harsher (as it is sometimes called) side of the natural world. In "Chickens the Weasel Killed" he recognizes that it is easy to be "fair about sacrifice" until seeing a ". . . weasel/ fasten on the throat" of a chicken (CP 88). This is a vision that stays, as does particularly the sound of the chickens subsiding, the "appeal to the ground with their wings" (CP 88). In "With One Launched Look" the deer fatefully accepts its lot; all else is irrelevant. Nathan Sumner, in his article entitled, "The Poetry of William Stafford: Nature, Time, and Father," sees this poem as an allegory on human behavior, the cheetah representing modern man and the deer representing man.[26] Sumner's distinctions between the two types of people are unclear and I find this reading difficult to accept. It is true some people do seem to prey on others, but it seems to me the relationship between the cheetah and deer is much different than that between two people. Most animals, although weasels are an exception, do not kill needlessly, but rather for sustenance which they tend not to waste. People, however, are endowed with the capacity to reason and may "rationalize" killing each other, but they do not need to kill. The "fateful diagram" suggests purpose, an awesome manifestation of a process,

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but this is not a needless death. However, even deaths in the natural cycle, Stafford suggests, have an "afterward" or touch us in some way. It seems more reasonable that these poems are reminders of natural cycles in the animal world, and of the life-death cycle in all life.

Some of the arbitrariness of nature is part of an important lesson to Stafford from his past. What may be antagonistic for us in the elements today may be a cause for joy tomorrow. Stafford clearly describes this quality in nature in "Uncle George." A blizzard on his Uncle George's farm kills the stock, but the snow protects and sustains life in the wheat. The farm is an important part of Stafford's education. Here he has learned that "a bough/ that held, last year, . . . this year may come down" (CP 120). His life is now, "one life at a time," less rich perhaps. But he carries the memories with him of his uncle's kindness in opening a screen for nesting swallows and, "'the barn/ [that] held summer and winter against that slow blizzard, the sky!'" (CP 120). He carries the knowledge that begins the poem, "Some catastrophes are better than others" (CP 119). Stafford has learned that the natural world may be a source of nourishment for us but that to engage in farming, for example, is still a perilous occupation. It involves an active participation in the natural processes, but that does not mean we have control of these elements, which can be both a hardship to our task, or a source of life. Natural processes, such as weather, occur with randomness and we can only protect ourselves from them to a limited extent. The poem is an unstated reminder that farming, the traditional middle ground, is still very much a part of the natural world and its processes.

Although the natural world may be a place of some risk, it is also a place that Stafford finds comforting or restorative, even a place through which he defines his values. "Through the Junipers" describes the way in which the natural world provides comfort; in "Allegiances" he defines his loyalties. In "Through the Junipers" Stafford tells us he wanders away through "low hills" with junipers growing on them. He enters deeply into the natural world; the low hills "open and close around me," he says (TTH 23). If he goes far enough all human reminders in sight and sound pass and he sits and "look[s] endless miles/ over waves of those hills" (TTH 23). It is a simple act but one which he holds in his memory. Having gone "far" enough in actuality later becomes a remembered and imagined act of what he holds from that which is far. He says:

> And then between sentences later when anyone
> asks me questions troubling to truth,
> my answers wander away and look back. (TTH 23)

He remembers the days and hills of his wanderings and knows nobody else thinks of them. But they are part of him, now a comfort, a place that may hold answers. He concludes: "And part of my life doesn't have any home" (TTH 23). Stafford is expressing the importance of his engagement in the natural world. It is a fluid but ever-present part of his life. It is a part that has no home in the conventional sense; rather, it is carried by him in his imagination. It is turned inward to give personal comfort and looked to for guidance later, but eventually finds creative expression through his writing and becomes outwardly directed to us.

In the poem "Allegiances" Stafford tells us something about his loyalties and by implication his values. For Stafford to be ordinary or common is important, and he implies this at the outset of the poem:

> It is time for all the heroes to go home
> if they have any, time for all of us common ones
> to locate ourselves by the real things
> we live by. (CP 193)

Since home is a place where one, in part, achieves a sense of self, heroes, he suggests, may not have a home, that is, a sense of self or commonality since by definition a hero is set apart like an object. He suggests it is time for we who are common to "locate ourselves," find a sense of self through those things that "we live by." The final phrase suggests a duality of meaning. It can mean the values we live by, or that which surrounds us, for Stafford the natural world. Holden says of the opening passage:

> . . . although the word "place" does not occur, the concept of "place" is implicit. . . . To "locate ourselves" is "to find a place for ourselves." As this passage suggests, "place" is not a static concept. We "locate ourselves" _by_ a process.[27]

This was also seen in "Through the Junipers" when Stafford tells us that part of his life has no home. As the poem "Allegiances" continues Stafford takes us out into the natural world sometimes seen in fearful terms. He names the fears: "elves, goblins, trolls, and spiders:--we/ encounter them in dread and wonder" (_CP_ 193). The first three creatures are traditional mythic characters which by custom represent and are an integral part of that which can not be explained in the physical world. Frequently supernatural powers are ascribed to them. Spiders are insects in the natural world that are frequently disliked, even feared. These four creatures represent natural processes and cycles which, if we see ourselves outside them, we may fear. They are not, however, necessarily realistic fears, rather they represent a projection of human fears because of a lack of understanding. But, in coming to know ourselves and our "place," these must be faced and understood. Stafford continues:

> But once we have tasted far streams, touched the gold,
> found some limit beyond the waterfall,
> a season changes, and we come back, changed
> but safe, quiet, grateful. (CP 193)

In order to find our "place" we will necessarily journey far, facing our fears, but having been there and discovered physical limitations as well as personal limitations, we will be forever changed. We will know something of the larger world, the natural world, and about ourselves and our "place" in this world. We will no longer be afraid; we will instead feel safe, calm and glad of our knowledge, both self-knowledge and knowledge of the larger world. He concludes by saying that if ever an "insane wind" holds the hills or

> . . . strange beliefs whine at the traveler's ears,
> we ordinary beings can cling to the earth and love
> where we are, sturdy for common things. (CP 193)

In the event that in our travels we are faced with inexplicable situations we have our place "where we are," our inner and outer sense of self and surroundings from which we can derive strength and comfort. This poem also shows Stafford's sense of journeys, which he sees as both literal and metaphoric. In a literal sense we can travel into the natural world and learn much about it and ourselves. But we also journey through life, and this is a journey not always easy to understand. Because of our sense of self, however, gained through experiences "far" into the natural world as well as in travelling "far" into the self, we can better face fearful situations. Our allegiances are to the common things because we have a confidence of self that allows for this to be so. This is a wilderness that teaches and consoles, and the poem suggests that we have something in common with this ordinary unheroic world. In both "Through the Junipers," and "Allegiances" (TTH 23; CP 193), in addition to celebrating or expressing pleasure in the natural world, Stafford is also suggesting the importance of both actually and imaginatively journeying there. He is suggesting the potential the natural world may hold as a territory where we may begin to develop a feeling of belonging in the larger world, which in turn gives us a physical and psychological sense of self and place.

In attempting to reach and articulate the significance the garden holds it has been seen that Stafford suggests experiencing it as a form of travelling or a journey. But he also frequently establishes what Lensing and Moran call a vertical hierarchy. They argue:

> Stafford's depiction of the essential wilderness is set up through images--almost always in terms of a vertical hierarchy. The outer world is one of surfaces and shadows; it is available to everyone and yields many precious moments. The other world, concealed and far less accessible, is underground; its perception becomes the abiding vocation of the poet.[28]

The poem "Bi-focal" is important in understanding this. In this poem Stafford distinguishes between that which exists on the surface, for example love, and something that exists below the surface, underground. The poem revolves around the word "legend" and in the opening stanza he says: "Sometimes up out of this land/ a legend begins to move" (CP 48). The Concise Oxford Dictionary gives as one definition of legend, "a traditional story popularly regarded as historical, myth." Stafford's legend is a story that arises from the land which almost suggests organic growth, continuity, and a long ancient history. The fact that it begins to move suggests fluidity and that it will spread out and become known. He asks: "Is it [the legend] a coming near/ of something under love?" (CP 48). It arises up from beneath love, the question suggests, which reinforces the "up out of the land" and the idea that the legend comes from somewhere else, somewhere unknown. He tells us, in the second stanza, love belongs to the surface, the phenomenal and objective world that includes "a map of roads/ leading wherever go miles/ or little bushes nod" (CP 48). Love is a humanly defined emotion and so is associated with the surface and is distinguished from the legend. The legend belongs to "under," it is

> fixed, inexorable,
> deep as the darkest mine
> the thick rocks won't tell\ (CP 48)

The legend is associated with the undersurface. The use of the word "fixed" suggests something static or permanent or inscribed, another definition of the word, but it is juxtaposed with "inexorable," which in addition to meaning "can not be persuaded by request," also means relentless. Holden notes that this latter definition gives the legend a dynamic quality.[29] Thus the meaning exists and continues, but we can not "persuade" a meaning from it; it is too deep, too dark. If a legend is a traditional story, myth, or an inscription (for example, as on a coin), then he tells us:

> As fire burns the leaf
> and out of the green appears
> the vein in the center line
> and the legend veins under there,
>
> So, the world happens twice--
> once what we see it as;
> second it legends itself
> deep, the way it is. (CP 48)

The burned leaf suggests a form of inscription, and again the legend is "veined" below the surface; it is found on the undersurface. By using vein as a verb he seems to be suggesting the legend is connected to a process, the natural processes. We can see the results of the burned leaf, the vein outlined, but it is the result of the processes we observe not the processes themselves. These are associated with deep and dark. Thus the world happens twice, both on the observable and phenomenal level, and on the undersurface level where the world "legends" itself. Again the noun is used as a verb which suggests an active and dynamic or ever-present quality to the legend. It is also paradoxical, since the legend is also inexorable in the sense that we do not know the meaning but we know it exists.

In "Bi-focal" Stafford contrasts "near" and "deep" and "dark," and Holden, who of all the critics has read the poem most closely, notes that:

> The distinction which Stafford makes between man and Nature is one which, throughout his work, he systematically represents in terms of physical distance. . . . In general, the degree of felt difference of identity which Stafford wishes to express between himself and Nature is represented, in a given poem, as physical distance. . . . The greater the distance, the greater his feeling of difference--of Nature's otherness.[30]

Holden goes on to note that "Bi-focal" is one of the few Stafford poems where nature is presented as "near"; usually, as was seen earlier, it is "far." Here nature is embodied in the legend which comes up out of the deep dark, and "deep" and "dark," which are unknown, are commonly associated with the natural world in a Stafford poem. Frequently, in order to try to penetrate the essence of this unknown quality, Stafford will, as was also seen earlier, journey there. In this poem this world instead rises up around him and he attempts to define it and its source. The world of the legend, he tells us, is deep but inexorable, in contrast to the surface which is known and is visible and is sometimes associated with light. In "Bi-focal" Holden sees "deep" associated with time rather than space. He argues that it and such phrases as "'The thick rocks won't tell' impl[y] that the time span of the world's legend has a geological scale, a scale of such immensity that it can not be visualized."[31] I think this is only part of the implication. Because Stafford engages directly or by implication the natural processes found in nature, I believe that the legend also refers to the processes, many of which we can not observe or can only observe the phenomenal consequences of. Thus they can, as Holden says, only be imagined and at some level their importance, even existence, must be taken on faith.[32]

"Bi-focal" implies the salvational aspects of writing poetry that Stafford has spoken of. Although Stafford does not define the legend, through his contrasts and paradoxes he establishes its existence, even where it might be sought. Through the tensions made available and established through poetic technique and diction, a world which cannot be described in the usual sense is nonetheless imagined and posited. Even though he can only assert its existence by suggesting that it moves and has a dynamic quality, he proposes an availability of the legend to those who may seek it, and that perhaps sometimes ("Sometimes up out of this land") there is a mood or time when people may be more receptive to discerning this other world. Perhaps, since it comes up near to us, under love, it arises when we feel community both with each other, and the natural world. This poem does not, as so often his poems do, suggest journeying or travelling to this world. Rather it defines Stafford's view of the world; it is bi-focal. It has a known and accessible level and an inaccessible level, known intuitively rather than in an absolute sense.

One way Stafford tries to reach the quality he believes resides in the natural world is to establish imaginatively what Lensing and Moran see as horizontal connections. As mentioned earlier, they may be roads on which we travel, or paths, or telephone wires, but each attempts to reach the world that is far, dark, or deep and exists below the surface. Lensing and Moran see the horizontal network as:

> . . . representative of a psychological state: the reaching out of the human toward the wilderness. . . . Each of these images--path, corridor, trail, tunnel, a visual glimpse . . . becomes a means of moral trajectory toward what is most authentic in human values. . . .[33]

Besides engaging the surface and undersurface of the world, "Ceremony" is a poem that also establishes horizontal connections. Stafford begins by describing an event:

> On the third finger of my left hand
> under the bank of the Ninnescah
> a muskrat whirled and bit to the bone.
> The mangled hand made the blood red. (CP 30)

What has happened has occurred below the surface, "under the bank" and below the water. It has been a hidden action, but as he continues we realize it has sealed a kind of union between him and the world. He continues:

> That was something the ocean would remember:
> I saw me in the current flowing through the land,
> rolling, touching roots, the world incarnadined,
> and the river richer by a kind of marriage. (CP 30)

He imagines his blood flowing through the river networks that eventually reach the sea. The rivers are the horizontal connections which allow an interaction, a marriage between the blood and water. The world, he imagines, is incarnadined, that is, crimson, because of his blood. But he also imagines that "Under the bank a muskrat was trembling/ with meaning my hand would wear forever" (CP 30). In the poem the muskrat has not been seen, but it has drawn blood and been the agent that has put him into a communion with the world. The finger will be scarred, a kind of formal seal and declaration of the event, as well as a reminder. Stafford does not say directly what "meaning" this holds; like the muskrat who "trembles with meaning" it too is hidden. But one significance the incident has is the chance for his union with the visible elements of the natural world, the chance to become physically part of its processes through the river networks. This is not a journey in the usual sense, but in a very real sense it allows the recognition that a small part of himself becomes part of the natural world. It is as if the thought gives comfort since he can only conclude: "In that river my blood flowed on" (CP 30). Only imaginatively has the intellectual self made the journey, but this is important because it points to ways whereby what is inaccessible may be made accessible.

Stafford sometimes expresses a desire for an integration of the self with the physical world. "Across Kansas" is an exploration of this integration. The poem works with oppositions which reverberate and is a journey into the past and through the present. Stafford is driving across the landscape of his childhood, and his family is asleep so he is mentally alone. The past of his memories is fused with the present; the present journey takes him on a past journey. The "level miles" awaken something deep within him, "like a bell rung deep till dawn" (CP 114). The memory the landscape evokes is the only reality for him and he realizes how deeply people carry this experience inside themselves, so much so that, "Once you cross land like that/ you own your face more" (CP 114). He says: "what the light/ struck told a self" which suggests that by taking the landscape into the self we also give to it something of the self (CP 114). We hold it; it holds us. Light illuminates that which is both immediate and on the surface, like the rock, and that which is internalized, the intuitive knowledge awakened deep within him. Upon stopping Stafford's "state" is still dark and he is unable to share his dream. The dark state is the inward journey evoked by the landscape, but now the state, Kansas, is dark; the knowledge it suggests is unknown and therefore dark. This is the landscape Stafford was born in, and when he returns to it it awakens strong but indefinable feelings inside him. The poem suggests how deeply we may be influenced by landscape and implies a connection between us and it. Just as on a physical level Stafford's blood flows into the river becoming part of it and in turn incarnadines the world, then the dark indefinable feelings inside the self are comparable to the dark indefinable qualities of the natural world. This suggests that we may unconsciously absorb these qualities and carry them with us. If this is so, then, in ways we have difficulty defining, much less being conscious of, we are intimately connected to the natural world.

A type of journey that allows one to enter into the earth is a journey into a cave. Caves are found in a number of Stafford's poems and because of social and literary traditions the use of them often resonates. Plato's cave and shadows on the wall come to mind, and the notion that essences are elusive, that beyond the meaning or reality we take from the phenomenal world there exists other meanings, is appropriate to Stafford's thought. In addition, caves in the Jungian sense of a journey into the self sometimes may be an appropriate resonance. But in a literal sense they are journeys literally into the earth. In a tangible way they are the one opportunity to enter imagistically into the natural world, into that which is far and deep. However, even in the cave Stafford is unable to penetrate beyond the physical limits. Yet because of the resonance of caves, their imagined depths, it is sometimes possible to intuit what Stafford is striving to articulate.

"From Eastern Oregon" is a poem that considers a journey into a cave. On a narrative level Stafford describes the entry into, exploration of, and exit from a cave, and the effect of the visit. It is a shared journey addressed to "you," which invites the reader to imaginatively share the experience. Again, entering into a cave is a literal entry into the earth and into geological time. Here, "your skin [is] a new part of the earth" (CP 140). It is also an entry into the self, which again brings a realization of our minute existence on earth. Inside the cave the usual sources of light and dark become reversed. Although in a material sense the eye tells us it is dark, we do maintain our own distinction by making our own light, but we do not make a shadow which suggests a one-dimensional quality to our existence. The story on the walls can only be discerned by touch, but it is either so small, or so old that it is long forgotten by such massive elements as mountains. Time, ours and earthly, has become compressed and hazy, emphasizing and giving perspective to our life span in contrast to geological time. Upon leaving the light and dark reverse. Now we do make shadows although we are consumed by light, and our frailty is suggested in a fossil-like image which also suggests that only our outlines last:

> You climb out again and, consumed by light, shimmer
> full contemporary being, but so thin your bones
> register a skeleton along the rocks like
> an intense, interior diamond. (CP 140)

The final lines above suggest that, insignificant as we may be, we do endure. The knowledge of the cave experience means we carry the cave home with us. As in "Across Kansas," the word "state" is mentioned and reverberates in the poem. We move in a condition of carrying deep knowledge, and the (political) state we pass through to get home reinforces that which we now carry inside us. We will now see our friends as junipers, but, more importantly, the ephemerality of life will be recognized. This journey into the dark, the cave, the earth, has shown us we exist as part of the earth, and a very small part, but we are all connected.

In many ways Stafford's poem "Watching the Jet Planes Dive" sums up his attitude to the natural world and implies the values he believes it embodies. The poem is filled with paths, trails, and roads which suggests connections to something and a journey to find it. The poem circles around the idea expressed in the opening lines: "We must go back and find a trail on the ground/ back of the forest and mountain on the slow land" (CP 44). Holden says of the poem: "At the poem's center is the metaphor of path as process."[34] Movement certainly permeates the poem, which suggests in different ways following paths or trails into the "slow land" beyond anything we know (such as mountains or forests) to "climb over the map in far places . . ." (CP 44). He suggests circling, seeking out places with noses and the palms of our hands. This proposes an integrated attitude to the natural world, a stance that attempts to close the gap between us and it. He says, "By such wild beginnings without help we may find/ the small trail on through the buffalo-bean vines" (CP 44). In part this may mean that this journey may have to be made alone, that it is a lonely task, or it may mean, as Holden says, that we find the trail without the help of reason or other "artificial guides."[35] The notion that the poem is a statement about intuitive action as opposed to rational action is reinforced by the last stanza when Stafford says:

> We must find something forgotten by everyone alive,
> and make some fabulous gesture when the sun goes down
> as they do by custom in little Mexico towns
> where they crawl for some ritual up a rocky steep. (CP 44)

Holden thinks the forgotten something is a path, but I think it is more likely the indefinable quality associated with the natural world and sought out and felt by following the paths to "far" places, that is, to the natural world.[36] Stafford invokes Mexican ritual that is associated with a reverence for the natural world and is intuitive and not based on linear thought as is commonly associated with "rationality." Stafford's final thought is, "The jet planes dive; we must travel on our knees" (CP 44). He means that we are unable to dive, we are of the earth and must travel on it, even on our knees as a similar "fabulous gesture" such as the Mexican makes. The poem suggests journeying to the natural world via roads and paths, even forging our own if necessary. He is emphatic; "we must," he repeats, do this, no matter how difficult, to find the forgotten something. We must also be grateful for whatever we may find, and perhaps he is suggesting even take it on faith. The poem points to an integrated involvement with the natural world achieved by actively travelling in it and physically touching it and responding intuitively to it.

This is Stafford's garden. As a place to enter, on a phenomenal or surface level, it is something he celebrates, respects, and finds comforting. But the natural world is richer than this; it exists, for Stafford, on a level he describes as being below the surface. This place is dark, unknown, and far from having easy access, but he constantly works to describe and illuminate the meaning or patterns this place may hold, and to show it as a model. In trying to do so he often travels there by various networks: roads, paths, trails. These are our connections on a literal and imaginative level, to the heart of the garden. In taking us there Stafford hopes to show us ways of achieving an attitude or stance that is receptive to the pulse below the surface. He himself believes that through his poetry he may achieve this. If we can accomplish this through a stance of our own, we may learn something about ourselves and the world that may be salvational both personally and in a communal sense.

In his writing Stafford tries to teach us, as he tells us in "Father's Voice," that his father tried to teach him, to live in the world as a

> . . . slow guest,
> one of the common things
> that move in the sun and have
> close, reliable friends
> in the earth, in the air, in the rock. (CP 157)

The modern technological world, however, while it brings us many benefits, has the effect of creating greater and greater distance between ourselves and the natural world. Like Birney, Stafford recognizes that decisions are made not on the basis of being a "slow guest" but on the basis of values inherent only in the technology. The machine has entered the garden and Stafford examines the consequences of this. In "Time" he sees the garden polluted, "The river . . . choked with old Chevies and Fords," and he says this "was the day the world ended" (CP 196).

Stafford juxtaposes the modern world with the natural world in different ways. In "At Cove on the Crooked River" he presents a picture of the Cove: it is beautiful, the kind of place trouble walks away from. Here the river means something and is home for "shadow-fish lurking below the mesa" (CP 99). The fish, below the surface, represent the good but undefinable ("shadow") quality of the natural world. It is a place of beauty and peace where natural rhythms are easy to feel. He says he would like to carve civilization,

> decisively outward the way evening comes
> over that kind of twist in the scenery
>
> When people cramp into their station wagons
> and roll up the windows, and drive away. (CP 100)

The sudden, unexpected introduction of the last two lines and the uncommented on but implied criticism of the reasons we are cut off and cut ourselves off is very effective. The result of this, as John Lauber points out, is that possession becomes a source of self-identity.[37] In "The Trip" Stafford puts it this way: "Our car was fierce enough;/ no one could tell we were only ourselves" (CP 96). They are equals with the car and stop to eat at a drive-in where "Citizens were dining" (CP 96). "Citizens" suggests a collective, conforming group of people who assent to the artificial values physically manifested in the drive-in's decor. Nothing is natural, not the waitress's eyes, the neon-spiced food, nor the shallow greeting of the manager. Stafford concludes with a humorous but grim observation: "Some people you meet are so dull/ that you always remember their names" (CP 96). This distancing created by technology brings greater excesses and absurdities until Stafford describes in "With the Gift of a Flower, for the First Birthday of the Computer of Humble Oil on the North Slope of Alaska" how the natural world, tree by tree, has been catalogued onto a computer and the world seems to be a haven for madness and destruction (GP 30).

In a long six-part poem, "The Move to California," Stafford tells us he will "Try farther west" (CP 45). He feels like a stranger among people who hedge their fields and establish, "other such limits to hold the time near" (CP 45). He glimpses a cliff and snow as he drives west and he knows something of what he is seeking but he has not, even yet, reached it. At the summit, mid-point on the continent he finds, "a little tree just three feet high [that] shared our space between the clouds" (CP 46). This relaxes him. Hope is found in the waterfalls near Hagerman; the memory of the falls consoles him still. But in Nevada he meets only martyred gamblers and "unbelievable cars" (CP 47). In defiance or despair he sleeps on the ground. It is in the final poem that he attempts to show the effects of what he has found "Along Highway 40" on the natural world he has experienced while travelling. Ironically it is "Written on the Stub of the First Paycheck." Quite simply, although he too owns a car, he knows "Gasoline makes game scarce" (CP 47). The value of miles of driving and a wildcat can not today be equated. He remembers a stuffed cat he had seen, shot on Bing Crosby's ranch, only to become a trophy. But in his housing tract home, feeling the ranch, that is, the ethos that shoots the wildcat, around him, "Every dodging animal carries my hope" (CP 47). He is identifying with the natural world which must dodge and live around modern society. This is one of Stafford's most pessimistic poems, since he can only hope for the animals and he says he is still wandering in the desert trying to reach the cliff he glimpsed while driving out.

In a succinct poem, "The Fish Counter at Bonneville," an old man counts, "So many Chinook souls, so many Silverside" (CP 43). These fish have been killed by the building of a dam to bring electricity. Stafford presents the technology of this dam as well as electricity, cars, and gasoline in other poems without comment. Their value is implicitly questioned when put alongside the natural world, and the effects of technology are shown. Like Birney, he does not propose a way of co-existence. He simply shows the effect of one is to destroy the other.

Technological values pursued for their own sake do not accommodate the natural world. Instead they encroach on this world: "Gasoline makes game scarce"; "So many Chinook souls, so many Silverside" (CP 47, 43). They have the effect of cutting us off, sealing us from any position that may be receptive to alternative values such as the natural world embodies; hence our own perceptions and values become dictated by technological values. When the machine enters the garden Stafford shows a world or landscape very much different from the dark far world of the garden that is deep and thick, where "the thick rocks won't tell" (CP 48). When we are cut off from this world our lives shrink, and now as he tells us in "Evening News," we inhabit a world where "a war happens,/ only an eighth of an inch thick" (CP 183). This "thickness" is later contrasted to the "thick house." Now the term is used with approval. Now it suggests, as the narrator walks through the house, that this is where his reality lies. Here, not on the TV screen that he has turned away from and that has already absorbed friends, life has depth and meaning. Holden says:

> The image of "our friends" who have "leaped/ through, disappeared" is an image of death-by-drowning, death as ultimate identification with the literal--the death of imagination.[38]

If the imagination dies then there is no access to the outer world of nature or the inner world of the self, and Stafford turns away from this, and moves through his own "thick house," and he enjoys the space. Greg Orfalea, in his article "The Warm Stoic: William Stafford," draws attention to the following line break: "At the sink I start/ a faucet" (CP 183). Orfalea suggests that "start" means both jolted by the commonplace back into reality, and a new beginning.[39] Something from "far" which is the natural world is brought to him again. Television saps our imagination and sense of reality and the water is an antidote to the war and the world created by television. The poet opens the door to

check where we live.
In the yard I pray birds,
wind, unscheduled grass,
that they please help to make
everything go deep again. (CP 184)

This poem documents one effect technology has on our lives and our relations with each other, rather than showing it as overtly intruding into the natural world. In this case it cuts us off from the natural world, but Stafford consciously turns back to the natural world in an attempt to touch it and thereby make life even thicker, to go deep into a richer reality.

Without maintaining a sense of self, and a sense of reverence for life, human and non-human, we may be led to destroy ourselves by war, particularly nuclear war. "At the Bomb Testing Site" is a poem of social criticism that considers this question. In it the lizard is waiting for history, both the human history that will destroy it and its own natural history. The natural history the lizard is part of is found in the second stanza. It looks for its part in the natural processes, the "scene/ acted," which also implies human history which is acted for "little selves" like the lizard or people without arrogance who also wait for the history (CP 41). There is a bitter irony at the end, with the lizard ready for the change waiting with hands gripping the ground. Because the lizard has elbows and hands it is aligned with those people who are vulnerable and can only wait for decisions made beyond their control, flattened and gripping what is most natural to them.

"Our City is Guarded by Automatic Rockets" is also a poem of social criticism. The first stanza presents the rocket as a feat of technology that breaks all (natural) laws except "Go" (CP 121). The rocket has power "relocating all its meaning in the dark"; in fact, power has made it and makes it perform, and, of course, it carries power to both threaten and destroy. But "Power is not enough," Stafford concludes (CP 121). The second stanza presents natural power which implies a contrast to the power that makes the rocket and the power this rocket represents. In the natural world there are rivers "let alone" which find their own natural course between lakes. This world, refusing to be "wise" in a conventional sense, is linked by chance. This is the outer "other" world, but just as soon as we "hear a guide" it moves away, "toward the opposite end of the road from home" (CP 121). Reading and holding on to the messages of this world is difficult. The final lines of this stanza are unclear:

> the world goes wrong in order to have revenge.
> Our lives are an amnesty given us. (CP 121)

One reading might be that the world, to revenge itself, "goes wrong" in the sense that it continues to be disorderly or natural, and sometimes, through processes or events corrects or "revenges" our human impositions.

In spite of this, or because of it, this means "Our lives are an amnesty given us" (CP 121). The directness and simplicity of this statement give it an added bitterness. A second interpretation might read these lines as meaning that the human technological world, imposed on the natural world, "goes wrong" because it turns away from the "guide." The world represented by the "guide" is a difficult world to discern and it suggests processes that humanity does not understand or control. A common human reaction to a situation it cannot control is to lash spitefully out at it. We take revenge or turn our backs on the natural world and the consequence is for the humanly-contrived world to "go wrong" and hence we are living on borrowed time. The first reading suggests the endurance of the natural world, even in the face of human imposition; the second reading suggests the motives for, and risks involved in attempting to control nature. Taken together the two readings have a resonant effect with the force of one reading underlining the seriousness of the other. In the third stanza Stafford likens himself to a cornered cat. He, like the cat, if hunted will "spit/ life . . . because I think our story should not end--/ or go on in the dark with nobody listening" (CP 122). Once again Stafford asserts the importance of listening and discerning the world, the legend in the dark, and most importantly, life itself.

When the machine enters the garden Stafford, like Birney, understands that the effect is to change it and sometimes destroy it. This seals us off from the natural world and, in turn, cuts us off from each other. It is a cyclic condition and Stafford, also like Birney, recognizes that the ultimate end is war and the potential total destruction of ourselves.

When the poet himself enters the garden his relationship with it is more complex and the interaction denser than when he is simply describing the garden or the machine in the garden. It is a middle ground but it is not in any sense idealized; rather it is a place used imaginatively to try to penetrate deeper into the meaning it holds. Through contrast, paradox, and poetic image Stafford begins to approach a definition of the meaning he seeks, and to offer glimpses of patterns he observes, but a clear statement or description of these meanings or patterns remains elusive. In continuing his journeys in search of meaning and patterns he is often, simultaneously, on a metaphorical journey into the inner, unknown self. His journeys into nature and into the self are part of his continual searching and self-questioning that, for him and should by example for us, lead to a sure sense of self and comfort with the ordinary and commonplace.

One corner of the garden that Stafford enters belongs in a very personal sense to him. It is still part of the garden, but is the garden of Kansas and the natural world that was opened to him by his father while growing up there. These are poems of remembrance, of a place that is now imaginative, but this past is an important source of love and strength and still an integral part of him. The past is important because, as he tells us in "Vocation," his parents told him: "'Your job is to find what the world is trying to be'" (CP 107). This single admonition, given in that past life, serves as both Stafford's avowed vocation and as a definition of a purpose of poetry. Although Stafford's concern with the natural world may, in part, be traced to his past, Jonathan Holden cautions against a too literal biographical interpretation of many of Stafford's poems about his childhood and parents. Nevertheless, Holden admits that some poems do contain biographical material but "it should not be given the weight or attention it would deserve were Stafford, like Robert Lowell, an avowedly confessional poet."[40] Undoubtedly Stafford did acquire much of his appreciation of the natural world from his family, and whether he learned it all from the father often addressed in the poems, or from a composite "father" of the persona of the poems, seems unimportant. What is important is the respect he still holds for this past and the sense of continuity it gives him. In the poems of his family and Kansas one feels a sense of loss or of things past now only alive in memory, but these poems are an expression of gratitude for what was given to him in these years. They are part of his "allegiances." But, rather than lingering nostalgically on what has passed forever, Stafford instead is defining for himself his personal past, finding his continuity and discerning its value. In a conversation with Richard Hugo in 1973 Stafford put it this way:

> ". . . it's as if I go back in order to check whether I'm ever really going to be able to go away [from a place], and I realize I'm not. You know, every time I go back I belong there. That past, in some ways--physically--I can escape it, but in my life I'll never escape it."[41]

It is the value he places on what he retrieves from his past that he fuses with the present. In doing so he allows us to partake in, and assent to or decline, the values he perceives. They are little gifts he invites us to share.

It was from his father that Stafford learned his love and respect for the surrounding world. He says in "Father's Voice":

> He wanted me to be rich
> the only way we could,
> easy with what we had.
>
> And always that was his gift,
> given for me ever since,
> easy gift, a wind
> that keeps on blowing for flowers
> or birds wherever I look. (CP 157)

It was from his father that Stafford also learned to listen closely. J. Russell Roberts, in his article, shows how Stafford's finely-tuned senses make him a sensitive participant in and observer of the natural world.[42] In "Listening" Stafford suggests that his father, in being able to hear all the minute sounds in nature, was able to make voyages. He says his father could hear small sounds in the natural world that, "every far sound called the listening out/ into places where the rest of us had never been" (CP 33). Just by listening closely, Stafford says, his father had access to that which is far, a place we usually do not recognize. The natural world spoke to the father in such a way that "the walls of the world flared, widened" (CP 33). Just by simply listening to the world, by inference its possibilities expand. In the final stanza Stafford suggests that in order to hear we must "invite" the quiet. By doing so we too may, some night, be touched "from that other place" (CP 33). The conclusion pulls the poem into the present and invites us to try listening ourselves, and to contemplate what will be found in that still unknown touch. Listening is important for Stafford as an access to the natural world, and it will reappear often, as for example when he tells us in "Walking West" that:

> Anyone who listens walks on
> time that dogs him single file,
>
> To mountains that are far from people,
> the face of the land gone gray like flint. (CP 35)

Stafford proposes that if we walk with a "quiet pace" we may be led up toward the mountains or a land--the unknown place?--where we will hear the badger. The badger is aligned with depth, possibly with the legend in "Bi-focal" that is "deep as the darkest mine." Thus listening can take us into places in the land and in the self where lessons are learned.

When the Europeans settled in North America many unconsciously created an inner world, one protected from natural elements, and they perceived the natural world as the outer world, out there. This is the urge to create a middle ground in the conventional sense, but it often had the effect of distancing and creating fear rather than forging a way of life that integrated the natural world of wilderness and cultural values. Stafford comes from a world in which many of the psychological elements were present to create this condition, but it was still a world in which these divisions were not as strongly defined as they are today. For Stafford, however, they are an important part of his past, one he sees realistically, but one from which he also derived much and still appreciates. He describes his "Midwest home" in his poem "One Home." He tells us twice it is a place where attitudes were shaped by "plain black hats" (CP 29). But it was a society that preserved food and the technology was "wan." It was not far removed from the dangers of encroaching on the natural world: "A wildcat sprang at Grandpa on the Fourth of July/ when he was cutting plum bushes for fuel" (CP 30). In spite of the limitations which Stafford understands, he is telling us that his home is rooted in a place that existed, "before Indians pulled the West over the edge of the sky (CP 30). The Indians represent a balanced relationship to the natural world, and something left when they were oppressed: the West, which seems to represent to Stafford a place or state of mind where legends dwell, where, "Wherever we looked the land would hold us up" (CP 30). Such is one of the places Stafford calls home.

This confrontation with the natural world is important to Stafford; without it we will not have a chance to learn from it. Again, it serves as a model for human behaviour; it embodies values that may be necessary for our survival. In "Prairie Town" he remembers the towns of prairie dogs from his childhood, but in memory the town becomes his home town. These are the towns that nourished his values and vision. He says:

> Pioneers, for whom history was walking through dead grass,
> and the main things that happened were miles and the time of day--
> you built that town, and I have let it pass.
> Little folded paws, judge me: I came away. (CP 70)

It has not been his destiny to remain in this particular garden, but as he told Richard Hugo and as he says in "Uncle George": "The cold of Uncle George's farm I carry home in my/ overcoat" (CP 120). It is his internal landscape literally and figuratively, and an integral part of his personal existence. He possesses this landscape and attempts to discover what he believes to be its essence. He has learned, as he tells us in "In Response to a Question," that,

> The earth says have a place, be what that place
> requires; hear the sound the birds imply
> and see as deep as ridges go behind
> each other. (CP 75)

This expresses an ideal place, deep, where one becomes ("be") that place. This place is the natural world,

> . . . a landscape
> that proclaims a universe--sermon
> of the hills, hallelujah mountain,
> highway guided by the way the world is tilted, (CP 75)

It suggests that we set our own paths in line with the earth's. This implies a compliance with the limitations Stafford suggests in the preface "At Home on Earth"; the consequences will be stability and balance. Stafford concludes by suggesting how this might be achieved: "Listening, I think that's what the earth says" (CP 76). This is one of the important legacies from childhood.

Stafford knows that part of the vocation he has established for himself involves,

> One's duty: to find a place
> that grows from his part of the world--
> it means leaving
> certain good people. (CP 106 "In Dear Detail,
> by Ideal Light")

This leaving and loss are expressed in "The Farm on the Great Plains." The poem is an important attempt to connect and find the path between past, present, and future. The elements of the poem: the farm, the plain, the family are all part of Stafford's allegiances. It is an imaginary telephone call which is a journey into his memory via the connection of the telephone line. The memory is of "A farm back of a great plain/ tug[ging] an end of the line" (CP 34). Imaginatively he calls there yearly, moved to renew his sense of self through his past. But the line is "cold," nobody answers. However, he says some year he will call and

> I will see the tenant who waits--
> the last one left at the place;
> through the dark my braille eye
> will lovingly touch his face. (CP 34)

He will see himself. On this imaginary journey Stafford confronts the part of himself that clings to his past, his first "place," which is also his sense of self. Some year, but not this one, he will admit that his parents have gone, died, and at that moment the line will be cut "because both ends will be home" (CP 34). Now his past place will be fused with his present place, sometime in the future. He concludes:

My self will be the plain,
wise as winter is gray,
pure as cold posts go
pacing toward what I know. (CP 34)

He will take this past place inside himself and walk with certainty now toward his future. Or he may also, as Holden argues, be saying he will become the plain, be returned to it in his death which he is (and we are) inevitably moving toward.[43] In this poem Stafford achieves a mature resolution of his past which, rather than dismissing or surrendering, he fuses to his present and future.

Thus the garden from the past merges with the present. The garden of the past moulded Stafford, taught him reverence, respect, and how to look and listen. It is, in the past, an ideal place but those ideals still hold true for the garden of the present. Lensing and Moran see this part of Stafford's life this way:

> The Kansas boyhood of Stafford, marking an epoch of American life between the two wars, is rural, austere, inhabited by companionable neighbours and dominated by family. Its value for Stafford, though, is more than sentimental. It ultimately represents a way of life that forcibly contradicts the urban world of the 1960s and '70s. Its moral precepts derive directly from an intimate familiarity with the land and the wilderness: ". . . we ran toward storms./ Wherever we looked the land would hold us up." [CP 29][44]

In the present the garden exists geographically elsewhere, but in holding true to his allegiances learned in the nascent garden of Kansas, Stafford still believes that, "The world speaks everything to us./ It is our only friend" (CP 196).

When Stafford describes "the garden" it is a place of stability, as remembered in Kansas, or a place of cycles and rejuvenation, or a treacherous place, but it is also, as was seen earlier, a place we may learn something from. He shows us the consequences of becoming alienated from the garden when the machine enters. But when Stafford enters the garden, either of the past or present, imaginatively and metaphorically we begin to glimpse what may lie there awaiting our discovery. To search out the meanings and messages he often works through paradoxes, and a "glimpse" is about all Stafford can offer and he knows this. It is a word he frequently resorts to.

Lensing and Moran suggest that some Stafford poems reflect a state "posited upon the kind of life the poet has attempted to stake for himself and his family. . . . Stafford's work taken as a whole is toward disclosure of a life that seeks to recapture the values of that other elusive and boyhood world."[45] In addition, as has been noted earlier, Holden points out that the natural world represents a model for the larger world, a place where "justice" is found. Lensing and Moran argue that Stafford achieves his stance toward the natural world in three ways: that he believes happiness depends on the location of where one lives, that it is necessary to burrow into the chosen place, and that it is necessary to have some isolation or withdrawal to learn the messages.[46]

Stafford achieves this state imaginatively when he enters the garden. In calling it "imaginative" I do not mean illusory, but rather mean it in the sense that it suggests a receptive and thoughtful mind. Stafford's poems display the sense of possession that Hugo spoke of. He has burrowed so deeply he takes the place into himself and returns it to us in his poems. Frequently the poems involve a persona alone and removed from the larger world walking or observing the minutiae of the natural world. Although he never loses sight of the human world, this stance appears necessary for thoughtful consideration or an imaginative rendering. In "Stared Story," for example, he says he remembers and imagines a time when Indians roamed the land and describes a life that represents a more integrated relationship with the earth. Now, sitting beside a river, we "survivors" can stare at the earth and remember and imagine another way of life as suggested by the first stanza. We can gaze "at earth [our] mother:/ all journey far, hearts beating, to some such ending" (CP 64). Imaginatively, by meditation, we can journey "far" back to our beginnings where presumably we may achieve some self-knowledge and a sense of our connection to the earth. Caught as we are in "our cynical constellation" we can "whistle the wild world, live by imagination" (CP 64). That is, we can whistle the world (the part of it which is "wild") alive imaginatively, and we can live by imagination which suggests a need to keep thinking, questioning and listening. Holden's idea that Stafford uses the natural world emblematically to stand for a just world also points to the creation of a sense of somewhere one belongs to, or a sense of place.[47] Listening, looking, imagining all help us "burrow in" and locate our "place."

"The Gift" is a poem that continues to consider the natural world as a place where we may journey in search of a sense of self and place. Stafford makes a distinction between people he calls tame and those he calls wild, but wild is used in a positive sense, the wild world that can be whistled alive. He is describing a writer searching for a personal past, a home and a common past. The person journeys travelling roads where he "salvages from little pieces . . . from distinctions, . . .

his grabbed heritage . . . from history" to try to find what he needs to know (CP 164). What he learns by "reach[ing] out far . . . he comprehends by fistfuls" but he asks "what can bring in enough to save the tame/ or be home for them who even with roofs are shelterless?" (CP 164). The person feels a sense of communal responsibility in his attempt to share his knowledge but doesn't know how to convey to the tame ones the sense of home, that is, self or place. The question tells us that tame people are those who do not have a sense of home (like heroes); although they may have roofs, they remain shelterless. It suggests that tame people are cut off from the natural world, but that their sense of security or shelter may be false. He says we may give scenes to the tame that suggest the wonder of nature, but it is the natural world that actually breathes the message. It says the message will be brought by wild men and their message is the gift. They will say: "'Begin again, you tame ones; listen--the roads are your home again'" (CP 164). What the wild people know is that home is not a static place but a journey, a road. It will be found by travelling or journeying, by implication, out into the natural world. The poem is a reflection of something of the task Stafford has set himself. It is about a writer searching desperately in the world for his sense of home or self, but even more desperately, searching for ways to reach others, searching for ways even just to show them how to look for their own sense of self. He wants only to share this knowledge, to give it as a gift. The poem reiterates Stafford's sense that the natural world may be a model for us, a source of deep and important knowledge and reflects his faith that only by writing about it will this be brought to us.

Stafford's place is the garden, and he makes a conscious effort to understand it and be at peace with it. As he presents it in the poems the place may be Stafford's place, but he also points to how we may find our own. He allows us to share his place by including us, sometimes by addressing the reader, sometimes by using "we" or "you," or sometimes by voyaging there and sending back "reports" or messages. In "Report from a Far Place" Stafford compares words to snowshoes. They are flexible and servicable; they may give pleasure, in fact under some circumstances they may save your life. But his "report" implies they may also have a life of their own:

> Be careful, though: they
> burn, or don't burn, in their own
> strange way, when you say them. (CP 239)

This warning may mean we have less control than we think we have or that we must use words, that by which we communicate, with care and responsibility lest they combust on us or others. In "Representing Far Places" he takes us into the natural world where "every leaf concentrates" and "fish in the lake leap arcs of realization,/ hard fins prying out from the dark below" (CP 96). The fish are associated with the dark unknown quality. They represent it, but so does Stafford, and as a representative it is sometimes difficult to "polarize" in society. To the representative it would seem like treason to be able to make small talk. As the representative "The land fans in your head/ canyon by canyon; steep roads diverge" (CP 96). The representative carries the depths of the natural world inside him or herself and knows the various choices of places to explore there. Stafford concludes:

> Representing far places you stand in the room,
> all that you know merely a weight in the weather.
>
> It is all right to be simply the way you have to be,
> among contradictory ridges in some crescendo of knowing.
> (CP 96/97)

When these feelings converge he gives permission to withdraw, to be unable to converse wittily in society. If you are a representative of a far place you will be outside society. The notion that it is all right to be as you must, faithful to the "other" world you represent, is important. It suggests a sense of self-knowledge and comfort in the certainty that being ordinary may, in fact, be a good thing. This poem brings "Allegiances" to mind again, where there is almost a suggestion of another world, one nestled deep or burrowed in the mountains under the earth, such as are traditionally associated with elves or goblins.[48] This alternate world may frighten us but once experienced changes us. To have been there is to be a representative of far places where having ". . . tasted far streams . . . we come back changed/ but safe, quiet, grateful" (CP 193). "Allegiances" also emphasizes that to have a sense of place we must engage ourselves with the surrounding natural world where:

> we ordinary beings can cling to the earth and love
> where we are, sturdy for the common things. (CP 193)

Stafford engages us imaginatively in these reports through the language; we feel we have been there too. It is simultaneously an "other" world, his world, and our world if we choose. That is, geographically we may not share it, but at levels that really count--deep, far, in rocks or trees--Stafford gives pointers that suggest access for us to it. Thus we too may learn to create our own sense of place. In "Reporting Back" he asks then answers:

Is there a way to walk that living has obscured?
(Our feet are trying to remember some path we are walking toward.)
(CP 74)

This suggests there may be a path to "the secret that holds the forest up" but that our daily lives have obscured it (CP 74). In the poems in which he reports from the natural world Stafford stresses the importance of paths and connections to the far place, the depth of the world there and the difficulty in holding and maintaining what is found there.

In "Late Thinker," a contemplative poem, the speaker relates thoughts, probably his own, in the third person as he sits beside a stove alone at night. He thinks of farms unavailable or "far" for people who are lost. The farm could be a literal farm or it may be representative of a middle ground unobtainable to those who are lost and therefore can not recognize it. The thinker is

questioning one grain at a time,
wandering like a dune,
easy with the wind-- (CP 104)

He compares himself to a sand dune, that constantly changes and shifts according to the prevailing wind, and he questions each grain which suggests meditation on the small particularities of the natural world, life, or self. Holden points out that the dune image is a self-configuration which implies a person who is constantly changing or adapting.[49] But the lines also suggest a metaphor for an individual wandering through life, questioning and considering what is found there. The speaker "tonight by the steady stove" knows "by sympathy . . ./ that some kind of organization/ is the right way to live" (CP 104). I believe that organization refers to patterns or processes such as are found in the natural world, since this assertion is preceded by the parenthetical image of the grains and the dune. He comes to a sympathetic knowledge in his wandering, which suggests intuitive knowledge arrived at because he is flexible. He is like a constantly changing and adapting natural phenomenon, which is the product of natural processes, and therefore what he knows is derived from the natural world. The lines imply a natural and adaptable system as being right, not so much in the sense of correct as in the sense of appropriate or fitting.

In the second stanza the speaker says he is a "secret friend" and stands with even the tiny hidden plants of the forest. He puts on a pack and imaginatively strides the continent remembering earlier "star-striding men/ who crossed the continent" to Oregon (CP 104). In part these lines represent people's traditions and dreams that, in literature, are often aligned to the stars. Historically the lines represent the fortitude and accomplishment of those who sought new and better lives in the west. They made their way there partly relying on stars for navigation, but travelling so far they seem to stride the stars. As a friend of the natural world, which represents alternatives, the speaker has joined these people suggesting that what he too searches for may be found in the traditional direction. But he also travels by train, to Utah where in a harsh climate and terrain people have settled. He "questions [these] pale towns," turns to "those haggard lands" and asks "Where are the wrongs men have done?" (CP 104). He has turned from social organization implanted on the land to the land itself, and, although the landscape represents justice, it is here that wrongs have been done. Or it may be a gesture of despair, or bitter irony, since in spite of the fact it is a just landscape it does not actively impart the messages or legend, and humanity continues to do wrong. He says:

> He counts each daily meeting,
> the stare of its blind meaning,
> and maintains an autumn allegiance. (CP 104)

In each encounter with the natural world which he values he still can not discern the meaning, nonetheless he retains a mature loyalty. But he still wonders ". . . what can he lean toward?" (CP 104). He answers by saying he remembers "wild places" and places "where pale fields meet winter" while continuing to search

> . . . for some right song
> that could catch and then shake the world,
> any night by the steady stove. (CP 104)

If the wind is often referred to as catching and shaking things, then so too will the song, possibly learned from the wind, catch and shake the world. Just as in "The Gift" things that are wild are aligned with the values of the natural world and the problem is how to convey what is learned there, here also wild places console him and he wants to be able to tell the world what he has learned but the problem is to find the "right song" to do it. He has imaginatively travelled in the poem into the natural world, "that landscape of justice" and it represents a fitting behavior for both the self and for life (CP 104). This is his quest which ties him to the star-striding men. Carol Kyle, in an article entitled "Point of View in 'Returned to Say' and the Wilderness of William Stafford," argues that Stafford is standing in an imaginary borderline state. She sees Stafford as delineating between the human and social world, and the natural world. She says:

> . . . each territory is clear but none is defined. . . . two unequal states meet, and the meeting is dynamically uneven. All that the two states ever share is the condition of neighbourhood: two countries share the common quality of being next to each other as two seasons and two people. . . . sometimes

> it is necessary to stand right on the border, right at the edge, right at the intersection where two things meet and nothing exists really by itself.[50]

Here, pale towns meet haggard land, pale fields meet winter, and the poet stands where "certain plants hide" (CP 104). He believes in the importance of the natural world, but as the poet, in a stance that accepts and seeks the song to shake the world, the journey takes him to the edge of meaning but the meaning remains elusive.

In "Bi-focal" Stafford says that the world "legends" itself but the legend is "inexorable." In "The Animal That Drank Up Sound" he attempts to discover the unexplainable by writing his own legend. Jonathan Holden has interpreted this poem as a ". . . symbolic tale whose theme is the poetic imagination" in which the cricket (the imagination), ". . . spontaneously reasserts itself to renovate the world."[51] I see it more literally as a kind of parable which proposes two types of relationships one might have with the natural world. As has been seen, listening, for Stafford, is an important way to make contact with the natural world. The idea that an animal could drain the world of sound, leaving a silent, dead and empty world is powerful because it means a network of communication is cut off and it is precisely what the human animal sometimes seems determined to do. The consequences can only mean self-destruction. The animal drinks with greed and buries, irretrievably, all the sound the earth holds. The poem also relates, however, the awesome ability of the natural world to recover itself in spite of the nearly perfect and systematic drinking of sound by the animal. This is the rejuvenative power of the natural world. In spite of the animal's thoroughness it has not probed deeply enough to search out all sound.

The earth is deep, and thick, but the animal has drunk only from the surface. This is the world "only an eighth of an inch thick" that is presented in "Evening News." But from the depths, where the world holds its legends, the cricket has hidden. "Think how deep the cricket felt, lost there in such a silence," Stafford asks us (CP 146). But the cricket softly makes a sound and ". . . back like a river/ from that one act flowed the kind of world we know" (CP 146). The sound which is a kind of connection and an expression of life creates new sound or life. This life flows back into the world like a river which is also a form of connection. In other words, life begets life, and we are all connected, even to the cricket. Life returns to the world,

> But somewhere a cricket waits.
> It listens now, and practices at night. (CP 147)

Now the cricket practices learning the song of itself in the night against the day it may be necessary to start again. But because it knows the song, regeneration will be possible if that day arrives. On one level the poem may be a warning against excessive use and abuse of the natural world. This is a metaphoric variation of Stafford's assertion in "Our City is Guarded by Automatic Rockets" when he says he will spit life "because I think our story should not end--/ or go on in the dark with nobody listening" (CP 122). But the poem also suggests that we are all, at a deep level, connected to each other and the natural world, and we must listen in order to know this and understand what this means. We too must practice to "whistle the wild world, live by imagination" in order to maintain our connection to it (CP 64).

Even when Stafford participates directly with the natural world, as in "In the Deep Channel," nature is still deep and dark. In this poem, on a narrative level, the speaker describes the sensations felt in setting a fishing line after dark and returning for the fish the next day. But the poem is also a journey that describes what would happen "if we went far enough away in the night" (CP 31). Something either unknown or independently directed ("secret-headed"), a fish or an experience, would rise from the deep water. He senses being watched from either the surrounding darkness, or the dark waters, yet the speaker also senses the "feelers" are both "noncommittal" and "black" (CP 31). The knowledge held by the fish or experience is hidden, it simply exists, it "is." He seems to be both within, that is, enveloped in the darkness, yet separate from it. In the daylight, when he pulls in the catch, the fishbellies "gleam" and can be seen. Even in the light of day although the surfaces remain the speaker can only feel "the swerve and the deep current/ which tugged at the tree roots below the river" (CP 31). This situation is aligned to "Ceremony" where the muskrat and that which is unknown exists below the bank and the river surface. The trotline suggests a connection between the two surfaces but the message is only felt. Even in this intimate participation with the natural world knowledge of the "secret-headed channel cat" eludes him.

Perhaps the poem that comes closest to revealing the legends in the dark is the poem "Connections." In this poem Stafford tells us that the lay of the land is low, swampy, and thus unknown. What is the mystery, the thread, "that will hold it all together" (CP 53)? It is a raccoon who is looking for the answer, but, since the raccoon puts his "hand" into the swamp, I believe we are intended to identify with the raccoon. The raccoon looks through a mask which suggests lack of clarity of vision; the answer may not be clear. But, "No touch can find that thread, it is too small," we are told (CP 53). Sometimes we think we learn the answers, glimpsing them in evidence that would be unacceptable in courts of law. The answers may be glimpsed in the unorthodox: "a sneeze may glimpse us Paradise" (CP 53). What we seek is, "without a surface"; these glimpses "flash through the mask only by surprise" (CP 53). We learn only what we can sense in "a touch of mud, a raccoon smile" (CP 53). This, of course, proposes an intuitive knowledge. These lines hold a feeling of separateness, of things that can not be seen and therefore known in a phenomenal way. But Stafford unifies us with these phenomena when he concludes: "And if we purify the pond, the lilies die" (CP 53). This is true, even observably so. It tells us we are all interconnected and interdependent and suggests that if we accept the fact about the lilies, perhaps we can and should accept what we know but can not explain.

"Behind the Falls" is a poem that shows, by travelling into the earth, again into a cave, the necessity of mutual interdependence between people. Stafford uses light and dark contrasts and shows that by entering into the dark this recognition may be made. Thus the earth again, as the intermediary or connector by which this recognition is arrived at, acts as a model of propriety. At the opening of the poem two people pass behind falls into a cave and are surrounded by "sheets of sound" of the falling water and the earth seems to have "fled inward" (CP 166). They follow the cave back with a cigarette lighter, but the roof is too high to be seen and a wall suddenly appears. They are in deep darkness and it is as if the darkness is like a curtain silently descending. The darkness, the unknown, is so enveloping that the tiny light from the lighter is ineffective and appears to diminish. Now they are literally in the undersurface of the earth, but the light, associated with what is seen and known (the surface) is weak in the face of such relentless darkness. He says, "We stopped, afraid--lost/ if ever that flame went out" (CP 166). The line break is interesting since read in conjunction with the next line it means should the flame go out they would be lost. But read in conjunction with its own line it suggests the primal fear of overwhelming darkness, fear of what can not be seen and therefore known which is fear of the knowledge of our smallness or ineffectualness. The helplessness in the face of this gives a lost feeling. It also suggests they are lost in the sense of confused about how to consider the unknown, it is so much larger and indiscernible. Ultimately the lines suggest that conventional means, such as a light, may not be the best way to penetrate the undersurface. If it is always dark then perhaps other methods will have to be found. But he notices that at this moment they see each other and themselves reflected, "surfaced" in one another's eyes and they become

> two real people suddenly
> more immediate in the dark
> than in the sun we'd ever be. (CP 166)

The light may be weak in comparison to the darkness but it is sufficient for both to see themselves reflected, and to see each other. The lines suggest the importance of each other; we mirror each other and need each other. That this fact is recognized in such dim light suggests that it is an elementary or fundamental piece of knowledge. And the fact that it is recognized under the circumstances described suggests the possibility of an interaction between dark and light, the unknown and knowledge. He concludes:

> When men and women meet that way
> the curtain of the earth descends, and they
> find how faint the light has been, how far
> mere honesty or justice is from all they need. (CP 166)

The moment of recognition, the lines imply, between the two people has been a moment of honesty, a kind of justice that occurred brought about by the particular circumstances in the natural world they find themselves in, and because they have been set apart from the surface world by "the curtain of earth." The line "[When they] find how faint the light has been" suggests that the light they were in prior to this moment, presumably normal daylight, now seems dim, since they have not realized, under those normal light conditions, how honesty and justice have been lacking. But honesty and justice are also "far," which suggests that at this moment they realize that these qualities are associated with that which is unknown, with the natural world, and that among the things we need we may have to reach out to find them and they may be found in the natural world. The poem is also like a journey into the self with the moment of self-recognition occurring at the moment of fear, loss and letting go. This moment acknowledges the necessity of others, and the need to know ourselves. The poem implies honesty and justice may be inherent in the natural world or at least it may create conditions to recognize these qualities.

The poem in which many of the elements discussed above converge in a single scene, and which holds some aspects of the three landscape categories, is "Traveling Through the Dark." In this poem we find an unsettled landscape, or the garden, through which a modern road, which represents the machine, is constructed. This establishes a tension between the technological world and the natural world. It is night and the speaker, or the poet, is driving, that is, travelling, through this landscape. As well as the narrative level of the poem, the event is also one of Stafford's metaphorical journeys. He is travelling through the dark of the natural world and the dark uncertainty of life. He has come upon a dead deer, safely swerved to avoid it, stopped, and "stumbled back" to remove it from the road. He realizes the deer is pregnant, and the fawn is still alive. He hesitates. The car, almost animate in its purring, waits: delayed on the journey. The fawn, alive, waits: its journey interrupted. The doe's journey is over. Stafford tells us, "around our group I could hear the wilderness listen" (CP 61). This is the wilderness that has watched and enveloped him while setting the trotline. Stafford must now journey inside himself to make the decision the wilderness is listening for. Now the wilderness will be the recipient of sound. "I thought hard for us all," the speaker says, presumably meaning himself, the fawn, the doe, others for whom leaving the deer might prove dangerous, and the surrounding wilderness (CP 61). This hesitation he says was his "only swerving" (CP 61). He decides for humanity and pushes the deer into the river. More clearly than in most poems Stafford defines some important conflicts in his stance, and demonstrates the difficulty of some decisions, and the absence of sharply defined answers.

This poem, though much shorter, has some important similarities and differences with Birney's poem "David." Both poems include an interaction with the wilderness, and require an ethical decision to be made. In "David" the perception of the natural world changes as the mental attitudes of Bob and David change. After David's death the wilderness, for Bob, becomes cold and threatening, and the darkness represents chaos and death. Fear is the result and it is this fear that is projected on to the wilderness. Although Stafford too must face causing a death, fear, such as Bob knew, is not felt. Bob's decision is perhaps more complicated; it was argued earlier that it stands for other decisions and recognitions made in the process of maturing. In addition, the saving of human life is, rightly or wrongly, also held to be more important than the saving of animal life. Nevertheless, Stafford does face a dilemma, and the sensitivity with which he senses the world around him waiting testifies to how deeply he feels his position. He must travel into the dark of himself to make his decision, and at this moment rather than fear, and a projection of it being applied to the landscape, the wilderness "listens"; it becomes the recipient of his decision. This is an inversion of Stafford's usual stance; now he suggests a more active two-way role between him and the natural world, and this is enriched by an understanding of Stafford's accumulated meaning of the word "listen." For just an instant, at the moment of decision, when he journeys into himself to consider all the possibilities, there is a momentary flash of interaction between Stafford and the wilderness. This short-lived convergence is the opposite of Bob's fearful projections.

Stafford's situation also dramatizes some of the conflicts inherent in his attitude to the natural world. Much of the technology of our lives, which we can not live without (except with enormous inconvenience), does harm and destroy the natural world. Stafford's respect for and love of the natural world means a respect for animal life, which makes it difficult to end one. But Stafford is also a man of the world, he lives in it and he too, of necessity, owns a car. He also cares deeply for people, he is involved with them, and writes for them as well as himself. And he also knows the danger of even hesitating on such a narrow road and decides to make the road safe for people by rolling the deer over the edge. But his momentary hesitation is admirable and reveals the dilemma he must feel himself caught in.

Finally, like Birney's poem "David," "Traveling Through the Dark" is also Stafford's best known poem and is the one most frequently commented upon by critics. In general the poem is praised for its dramatic qualities, its succinct but plain language, and its controlled use of tension and suspense. Roberts, Lynch, and Lensing and Moran praise the poem without reservation.[52] But other critics, though drawn to the poem, express reservations that revolve around Stafford's hesitation and his line: "I thought hard for us all--my only swerving--" (CP 61). Warren French, in an article, "'Sunflowers through the Dark': The Vision of William Stafford," defines his reaction to the poem as "ambivalent." He believes that there is nothing to think about in the situation, that there were no choices. He then sees Stafford's description of thinking as his only swerving as "both a flash of anti-intellectualism and endorsement of the too-great inflexibility that I found the plainsmen's [of Kansas] pathetic liability."[53] In my view this statement shows a flash of misunderstanding of many of the basic premises and sympathies that operate in a Stafford poem. Greg Orfalea, while he admires the poem, is bothered by this same line but then reasons his way through his difficulties to the reading usually given these lines:

> If "swerving" means an action that can cause an accident, deaths, as it has [in earlier lines], then something bizarre is introjected--that thinking responsibly is antagonizing the situation. I can't believe Stafford would mean this. . . . My own inclination, judging from effects in other Stafford poems, is that the word "swerving" has changed its meaning subtly:

> here, swerving in responsible thought is the only way to assure protection of human lives. . . . A mental "swerve" has occurred --recording as many permutations of what will happen as possible, before acting, but then acting, definitely, finally.[54]

Richard Hugo describes his reasons for not caring for the poem as "irresponsible," then discusses the poem as if his response is wrong and everyone else's right. He believes that if it succeeds it is because Stafford has overcome difficulties in describing the Pacific Northwest landscape that was initially unfamiliar to him, that is, in this poem Stafford has at last internalized the Oregon landscape. For Hugo, however, the poem "jars [his] Northwest soul."[55] He thinks "aesthetically . . . a poem cannot afford time to wait for a decision, only time for the decision to be rendered or better, named. But I can't defend this."[56] On a realistic and practical level, being from the Northwest, Hugo knows what the decision ought to be and is impatient with the delay. There is no time to think; someone else may drive up and kill everyone. Hugo does not, however, let his criticism end here. He raises the interesting question of why Stafford had used the poem as the first and title poem of his second book. He concludes:

> I think [Stafford] realized that he had "used" that foreign external landscape and managed to write a sound poem (I'm sure one he likes much) out of himself. . . . Here, I think he knew he had literally traveled through the dark and now both ends of the Kansas line are home. He carries his world within him for good, and no matter how foreign the external landscape, he will travel through its darks and find his poem. . . . The real sacrifice is not the deer but the external world, and the real salvation is not the life of the next motorist but the poem itself.[57]

Whatever reservations Hugo and other critics may have about the hesitation and swerving in this poem, Hugo's conclusions are still generous and, I think, accurate. The poem may lack, for Hugo, a level of true verisimilitude; thus the external world is sacrificed. But it is a poem that has come from inside Stafford, at deep dark levels where the Northwest meets Kansas; hence the hesitation, but also the salvation which is the poem itself. It is a problematic situation that it is not hard to find parallels for in life, and in writing the poem (the stance that accepts) he returns it to us for meditation. For Stafford it is "'not a poem that is written to support a position that I have chosen, it's just a poem that grows out of the plight I am in as a human being'."[58]

When Stafford enters the garden, unlike Birney, he seldom uses the natural world as a metaphor for his own despair. He does not feel less strongly than Birney, but he expresses his fears more directly, or simply attempts to restate again the importance of discerning what this world speaks. When Stafford enters the garden the issues he considers and the ways in which he believes access to it may be achieved do not change but the quality of the experience does intensify. He remains emphatic that there are connections to it: roads, paths, rivers, or by listening. And the natural world continues to exist on two levels: the known phenomenal level, and the deep thick, undersurface level. While the former level gives pleasure it is the sub-surface level that he attempts to penetrate through his stance. Like the natural world, Stafford's stance seems to have two levels. He may suggest to us how to reach it through actual journeying or by being receptive to sound, but ultimately the stance he assumes--writing poetry, "the stance that accepts"--may not be available to all. We may share his stance by reading his work, but not all will write with the same confidence and skill.[59] His work, when he enters the garden, is constantly faithful to his belief the natural world holds meaning and takes a rich and paradoxical form of expression, but he can only allude to the meaning through technique, the language and definition elude him. Thus at another level his stance is imaginative, personal, and only available to us second-hand. But like the world he believes to be a model for us, his is an example to strive toward. We too may enter the natural world on a phenomenal level (and this is essential) and attempt to accept what it speaks on a sensory or intuitive level, but our form of expression of this experience will have to follow our own creative and imaginative pathway. For Stafford the garden is his middle ground. He creates it, not by modifying the wilderness, but by bringing to the wilderness skills from the social world and through them attempts to understand it on its own terms. He is not always able to define this experience but he is convinced of the importance of continuing to try to do so. In continuing this he experiences a deep sense of self and place that is not only important but pleasurable.

At the outset it was noted that in his attempt to discern the meaning the wilderness holds Stafford is searching for elemental patterns. As also seen earlier, Lensing and Moran see this as a form of mythmaking. They argue:

> Stafford's play with mythic invention or modification occurs most noticeably when he seeks to establish some means of linking the human questor and the hidden wilderness.[60]

They are referring to such incidents as "the raccoon's smile in 'Connections' or the blood from the poet's finger in 'Ceremony'."[61] It is true that at moments like these in a Stafford poem we do begin to sense what he is trying to say. It is the sense of wonder, awe, peace, fear, or enormity that may occasionally come to a person while in the natural world. As it is for Stafford, it is usually a fleeting moment, a glimpse of something that words fail to describe but that leaves a person with strong and tumultuous feelings. These moments that Stafford seeks so diligently to expose are perhaps the beginning of the discernment of a pattern as yet undefined. Stafford himself uses the term myth in discussing his world, but I have reservations on its use and think that calling them myths or mythmaking may be hindering rather than helping this task. Lensing is emphatic in his article that he does not use the word in a traditional literary sense, and he and Moran in their book quote Stafford's view on his mythmaking which defines it in a very special sense.[62] Yet Lensing and Moran in their discussion of Stafford's relationship to his father and use of father imagery in his work discuss it in terms of traditional archetypal father associations.[63] Perhaps the use of the term myth is too loaded; it bears the weight of too much history, both literary and social. Ultimately Lensing and Moran do not say what the myth is, simply that Stafford is seeking it and that its moment of greatest possibility occurs in the convergence between the surface and undersurface worlds. They seem to see it more as a process, which is something much different than a myth. A myth suggests something established, but fixed, a fact, whereas process suggests something changing, and flexible. It may be that this is perhaps closer to what they are trying to define, given the constantly changing and adapting world of nature. Stafford's use of the word "patterns" is possibly more useful. It suggests something to be copied or imitated, a model, and it also suggests a condition of movement, a process, something that is flexible. His own close observations point out connections that must be actively pursued, a quality of inter-dependence that flows between us and the natural world, or something deep and dark. All this points to activity, action, and decision, not something defined forever.

Certainly Stafford's work contains recurring patterns that he finds in the larger world, although their meaning remains elusive. What is clear is that they are patterns of continuity and interdependence. When asked if he believed he was forging new myths he answered:

> "Forging new myths" sounds as if a person is somehow in a good deal more control than I feel I am. I merely have the sense of starting out on some kind of experience that leads onward.[64]

His answer suggests a reluctance to be tied to the term when he restates his sense that instead he is engaged in something active and ongoing. He journeys into the world and returns with "the news of the universe" he has found. The important thing is the journey, the wonders discovered on it, and the return with the gift or message for the rest of us. He is the self-appointed representative of far places who brings us the news.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS

> "They call it regional, this relevance--
> the deepest place we have . . ."
>
> "Lake Chelan"
> William Stafford

It was stated at the outset as a thesis that Birney's and Stafford's work differs greatly in tone and technique but that they share many similar concerns, even beliefs, and in different ways reach very similar conclusions. The individual examinations of their work perhaps suggest greater differences than similarities, so the purpose of the following discussion is to compare their work in some detail.

Both Birney and Stafford share the conviction that the act of writing poetry is important, and in a sense both express Stafford's belief that this act may be "salvational." For Birney, "The act of artistic creation is itself the strongest blow we can deliver for survival, an assertion of our belief in a human future too wonderful to name."[1] There is, however, a subtle difference of emphasis between the two attitudes. For Birney creativity is an expression of faith; faith in the possibility of a better future. For Stafford, "poetry, the stance that accepts, may be salvational."[2] This suggests a posture of active engagement with the natural world that may lead to a discovery of something--a knowledge, truth, or an understanding--that may serve, even save the world. But Stafford is not certain; "may" is what he says. Thus his attitude, too, is something of an expression of faith. And both statements point to a belief that there is something askew in our lives that suggests an uncertain future.

Birney and Stafford each hold beliefs that underlie their writing. Birney believes in the necessity for each of us to live as creatively as possible, but he is alarmed by creativity that is not used responsibly and that is destructive. However, at its best, creative action will, he believes, lead us to a greater sense of brotherhood. Stafford's belief that poetry may be salvational suggests a similar attitude: living creatively is important. And his idea that through his poetry he would like to help people "converge" also points to a shared belief with Birney that we need greater respect for each other. These values and beliefs, expressed by Birney and Stafford, reflect a commitment to humanity and a strong sense of responsibility for our future. Their ideas extend to include the natural world which they recognize we have been cut off from. It is their purpose to try to show our connections to this world, and point to ways in which humanity and nature may truly converge.

In each chapter on Birney and Stafford there was an examination of the garden they each describe. Each celebrates and renders the natural world with pleasure and accuracy. Birney's "Takakkaw Falls" and Stafford's "B.C." are good examples of this. Sometimes both describe using the natural world in a more traditional way, as a place of retreat, comfort, and restoration. "Holiday in the Foothills" is Birney's solace, "Through the Junipers" is Stafford's. But each knows the natural world is not idyllic, that it may be arbitrary, dangerous or oppressive. Birney describes this in "Eagle Island" and this understanding is also implicit in such poems as "Atlantic Door" or "David." Stafford too presents this aspect of the natural world in "With One Launched Look," "Chickens the Weasel Killed" and "Uncle George." Finally both poets share an understanding of, and admiration for, the long time-scale of natural history, beside which the time-scale of human history is short. Both poets include this understanding explicitly and implicitly, although they use these facts with differing emphasis. Ultimately, for Birney, the natural world is a metaphor for experiences in life, while for Stafford it allows a metaphoric journey into the heart of the natural world where he may be able to discern patterns, or realize a meaning or elemental truth that he believes can help us all. One is a poetry that looks outward to the natural world, the other looks inward, and it is here their views begin to diverge.

Birney is emphatic, in "North of Superior," that the land, in itself, holds no meaning or significance. It is we who may, out of fear or lack of knowledge, project or attempt to apply some meaning, but this is much different than seeing a will in nature that directs meaning. The natural world continues its eternal cycles and rhythms, and although we may lose sight of it, we are really just a part of these processes; beside them we are merely "flickers on the long horizon" (I 21). For Birney the natural world is a place with order and continuity, and as such represents a form of creativity. He attempts to remind us of our connections to the natural processes through references to geologic time, or through ocean or air imagery. In the long distant past we all originated from the ocean and we all now share the common air. He uses the natural world as a model of creativity to suggest that we act in a similarly creative and constructive way. In doing so we will then recognize our common past, our ties to the natural world and perhaps be bonded in greater respect, and brotherhood. In such poems as "Atlantic Door" and "Pacific Door" Birney uses the natural world as a metaphor for experiences in life. In using it this way he points to a potential creativity for us, which in turn points to a recognition of our ties to nature and to each other.

Stafford too knows the processes of the natural world endure and continue without the necessity of human intervention. He suggests this in "Things That Happen Where There Aren't Any People" and "A History of Tomorrow," but this view is less emphatic than Birney's, and is complicated by his belief that somewhere beyond or deeper inside the processes lies something important to be discerned. It is up to us, however, to make the discovery which implies he does not believe nature emanates these messages with any will. Just as radio waves fill the air but can not be heard without a receiver, so too do the messages or patterns of the natural world lie awaiting reception, or more correctly discernment. There is a second aspect of Stafford's work that is similar to Birney's but again differs in the way it is used. If, for Birney, the natural world is a model of creativity, for Stafford it is an "emblem of propriety." This idea may be as explicit as the rock which represents human knowledge in "Things That Happen Where There Aren't Any People," or it may be an implicit lesson, a model that suggests a form of appropriate behavior, a posture or attitude toward self and others in which mutual interdependence is recognized.

The most important difference in Stafford's use of the natural world is his conviction that it exists both on the known phenomenal level, and on a level that is "far" or below the surface. It is this aspect of the garden that concerns him most. He attempts to describe where, below the surface, this world lies in "Ceremony" and "Bi-focal," and to penetrate this area through metaphoric journeys, travelling his many paths, roads, rivers or other connectors to reach the far place, or the deep unknown quality, although it remains elusive and undefined. In making these journeys Stafford experiences the known phenomenal natural world which he takes inside himself, and later offers to us by reaching back into his memory and imagination in the poems. These journeys and places he goes to in the natural world become a shelter or home, but not in the conventional sense; they reside in memory. The result, for Stafford, is a sense of self and sense of place. The poems suggest that if we too journey deep into the heart of the natural world we may be able to glimpse deeply into that quality that Stafford has trouble defining, even describing. Nevertheless, the experience may later comfort us, give us, too, a sense of self and place since, as he says in "Allegiances," when we return "We come back, changed,/ but safe, quiet, grateful" (CP 193).

Perhaps the underlying difference suggested by these specific differences between Birney and Stafford is the differing degrees of their sense of "otherness" of the natural world. This is reflected, not only in their approach to the natural world, but in the tone of their writing also. Emotionally Birney has a strong sense of the natural world embodied as part of himself. If it were not he could not describe it with such fresh imagination and accuracy. His images would be less sure, more artificial. Yet at some level, perhaps because he so forcefully sees nature as indifferent, which implies a distinction or separateness from self, he does not believe it is possible, or perhaps does not feel it is necessary, to attempt to penetrate it more deeply, at least poetically. Stafford, however, would like to bridge the otherness, penetrate it, seek out its meaning. He never shows that he believes the natural world has a will that directs these messages, he just holds to a belief that perhaps it is possible, even necessary, to glimpse and describe them. This suggests differing intellectual and emotional attitudes in the two poets, but they both begin from a position of deep concern both for the natural world and humanity.

Both Birney and Stafford are most specifically in agreement in their descriptions of the effect of the machine in the garden. The inclusion of the humanly-created landscape in their work is important. In part, it counterpoints the natural world; comparison of the two is implicit. Their interest in this world also suggests that they are not using the natural world in an escapist sense. The poems serve as a form of social criticism that is not made from a stance that is anti-social, but rather from a position of concern for humanity's future. Both poets understand that our technology cuts us off from the natural world. Birney shows this in "The Shapers" and "What's So Big About Green?" He describes the logical extension of mindless intrusion into the natural world which is pollution so total that all the natural life forms are obliterated. In "Billboards Build Freedom of Choice" and "The Ballad of Mr. Chubb" he describes the garishness and ugliness of the technological world where the landscape is pushed into the background, and the effect on human lives cut off from each other. Stafford in "At Cove on Crooked River" and "The Trip" also shows how we become cut off from the natural world and that another logical extension of this is to begin to succumb to artificial values that seem inherent in the surrounding artificially-created world. In "The Move to California" and "The Fish Counter at Bonneville" he describes the toll technology has on the natural world and suggests, though does not resolve, the many conflicts involved in deciding between human demands and needs, and the effect on nature.

In "Way to the West" Birney suggests this uncontrolled use of technology is tied to our system of economic organization. He links the dream of riches that lay in the old route to the west to Vietnam and thus suggests that a society that exploits the land for profit also exploits each other, and this devaluation of nature and people ultimately leads to war. His descriptions of the landscape in his war poems, "Hands" and "Dusk on English Bay," reflect a projection of his despair over war.

Stafford too understands that a world that devalues the natural world devalues itself, and ultimately is led into war. He does not, however, tie this to economic or political reasons. For him, in "Evening News" the world of technology and the war on television is one-eighth of an inch thick; by comparison the natural world is deep, thick. He turns away from the shallow world and its values since to subscribe to them would be to disappear or lose one's sense of self and nature. And in "At the Bomb Testing Site" and "Our City is Guarded by Automatic Rockets" he shows the fearful enormity of war technology and the frailty of nature and people by comparison. The poems link humanity to the natural world and suggest the degree to which what is natural is more appropriate, and that this technology, which is unnatural, is only destructive.

Though again there is some difference in emphasis, Birney and Stafford are in agreement that technology seems to create its own values. For Birney technology represents human creativity that "bedevils" us and he tries to show its dangers and consequences. Stafford shows that technology for its own sake has no accommodation for the natural world and often little regard for human life, and he too fears the consequences of this. Perhaps the most important aspect of the inclusion of this in their writing is that these poems suggest a conflict between human needs and the place of the natural world in our lives. Neither poet suggests a surrender of the conveniences that have made our lives more comfortable, but they do suggest the cost of this has been to cut us off from the natural world and subsequently abuse it. It is the uses to which we apply technology and the costs it exacts that they question. They imply that a world that seriously weighs the effects of technology on the natural world will also be led to greater respect for ourselves and others.

It is when Birney and Stafford each enter the gardens they have described that their poetry diverges most. The experience described is one of deep emotional involvement that finds very personal expression. Now the natural world reflects each poet's despair, delight, or ongoing search for meaning. Each perception of what is seen is unique, yet for all their differences, when they emerge the conclusions their individual responses point to suggest some shared attitudes and concerns.

For Birney the garden continues to function as a metaphor for human experience, but now his descriptions also mirror his response to his observations. The natural world becomes infused with his own state of mind. Some poems show how creative adaptation to the human and natural world leads to a joyful response, a sense of well-being, and brotherhood. And the descriptions reflect this. In "David" when Bob and David adapt successfully to the natural challenges, which also represent challenges in life, the descriptions are full of light and pleasure. In ". . . Or a Wind" the same is true of the energetic, light and airy descriptions of the wind which also represents people. But frequently Birney does not feel such optimism, and in these poems the descriptions become steeped in darkness or chaos which may represent failed creativity which, in turn, may result in physical or spiritual death. Darkness may also represent fear, the primal fear of death, or of the knowledge of our smallness or aloneness as a species. And darkness may also simultaneously represent Birney's despair over people's refusal to acknowledge our mutual interdependence with the result that we are often destructive. Again "David" shows this. When Bob and David forget the necessity of each other, when pride leads them to an uncreative adaptation, death results. Bob, who must face all this, becomes frightened and his fears are projected on to the landscape which is now perceived as threatening. "Bushed" shows how failure to make a spiritually creative adaptation results in the trapper projecting his fears on to the landscape. "Biography" shows the bleakness of a life that has lost sight of the fact that we need each other. But it is in "Man is a Snow" and "Vancouver Lights" that we see Birney's own despair. The former poem shows Birney's darkest view of humanity and the images are of a deathly cold and darkness; the latter poem expresses his fear that we may be on a path of total self-destruction. The images in this poem are very dark, very bleak; chaos and destruction are black, fear is black. He asserts, however, that we have the potential, we have made light, that we need each other as a comfort against our smallness, but that we must take responsibility for our creative potential and the uses it is put to. Thus when Birney enters his garden we see the projection of a psychological state on to the descriptions of the landscape.

For Stafford entering the garden is a continuance of his journeys, his search to find the connections between us and the natural world, and to describe the patterns he sees there. This often takes him into even deeper, darker corners, but in his poems darkness is not fearful but represents the place that is far, the repository of patterns and meaning. For him these are also journeys into the dark inner self in the search for self-knowledge and a sense of place. For Stafford the natural world also continues to act as an emblem or model. "The Gift" or "Late Thinker" suggest that a posture that is receptive, flexible, a "stance that accepts" may be a form of appropriate conduct. Sometimes Stafford sets himself up as a reporter or representative of the natural world. "Report From a Far Place," "Representing Far Places" and "Reporting Back" all show the natural world as a place that is far and deep, and reiterate the importance of looking for paths or connections to this world, although they also show the difficulty of holding on to what is found there. In poems like "In the Deep Channel" and "Connections" he again probes the undersurface where things are deep and unseen. He can intuit the connections, even feel them, but can not fully describe them. And underlining all the poems is the unstated assertion of the importance of even just intuiting what is found and of appreciating the example or emblem this world offers. Darkness in a Stafford poem is sometimes paradoxically a source of enlightenment. "Behind the Falls" shows that by journeying into the darkness of a cave and the darkness of self one may come forcefully to realize the necessity of each other as a comfort. Finally, in "Traveling Through the Dark" Stafford travels into the dark of the self and the night and makes a difficult decision, one with no clear answer, and sacrifices the life of a fawn for people's lives. Each of these poems is, for Stafford, a journey into nature and into the self --the perceptive, imaginative self, that is the repository of his experiences in nature. Stafford attempts to illuminate what he often can only instinctively feel at the point where self and nature intersect. The model of the natural world and Stafford's own receptive stance suggests a lesson for us all.

A final important difference between Stafford and Birney, not yet discussed, is the question of the role of the past in their lives. For Stafford the past is "The cold of Uncle George's farm I carry home in my/ overcoat" (CP 120). It represents the garden of childhood, a place of love, a source of values, where he learned to look and listen to the natural world. His poems of the past show how he, and by implication we all, carry some part of our pasts inside ourselves. The poems also represent a personal continuity and in "The Farm on the Great Plains" he fuses his past, present and future inside himself where they merge and find definition and value. Birney has no such category of poems that consider, in any explicitly biographical way, his past. The landscape of his early childhood and youth were the mountains and forests of Alberta and British Columbia. His life was the simple rural life of Canada in the early twentieth century, a life where much time was spent in the outdoors close to the wilderness.[3] Like Stafford it was here that he learned to love and respect the natural world, and it is a landscape that is an integral part of many of his poems. But unlike Stafford he does not attempt to define or redefine this period of his life. It may be that this aspect of their writing represents a subtle national difference.[4] For Americans, whose national sense of self began with the Revolution, defining and reinterpreting the past in light of the present has been an ongoing tradition, whereas in English Canada, whose history is not marked by a revolutionary break from Britain, the transition from colony to state was managed with continuity. The British tradition has been the dominant ruling tradition, even in literature, and Birney is part of a reaction to this literary tradition. He consciously attempts to write in a fresh, modern and unique way.[5] Forging new literature, fresh literature, is his purpose, not turning to the past, personal or political. However, from the point of view used to examine the poems, this subtle difference, that may be a national difference, is the only pronounced difference to have emerged. It may be that, were the work of these two poets compared, in its entirety and from the point of view of poetic tradition, greater national differences would begin to appear. This is not the purpose here, and it is my feeling that in their view of the landscape, and our relationship to it, Birney and Stafford are fundamentally in agreement.

By establishing the garden in the wilderness Birney and Stafford invert the traditional view of the garden. It is not an ordered landscape, but the place that is sometimes seen, historically, as chaotic and therefore corrupting. For them, however, this quality is what they value and is a source of strength. In some sense this partly aligns them with the historical attitude to the wilderness as restorative, a place of retreat. But they also know it may be a place of danger and requires respect for human limitations. In addition they also bring to the wilderness a twentieth-century scientific understanding which prevents them from idealizing it, but also simultaneously enhances appreciation and inspires humility. They exhibit a healthy, balanced appreciation which they put to imaginative use in their poems. The wilderness becomes, for them, a middle ground, but not found, as it usually is, in the rural. Nor have they a tendency to make it a retreat into sentimental pastoralism. Their middle ground represents imaginative pastoralism as described by

Leo Marx. It is a psychological territory as well as a physical territory, a symbolic landscape created by the mediation between art and nature.[6] It is a place they believe can lead us into greater self-awareness and help us to create a healthier, better world. And should we doubt this they include examples that demonstrate the toll the humanly created world may extract from the natural world and us, if we fail to heed the natural world. They present territories that represent future possibility both good and bad.

It was noted earlier that although Birney and Stafford perceive and describe the garden in very different ways the conclusions they suggest move into similarities. It was noted that when they speak about what they are attempting to do through their writing, and the importance of writing, they use different words to describe their purposes. Birney speaks of creativity and brotherhood, Stafford of salvation, discoveries, and connections, but by travelling their very different pathways they arrive at a place that suggests visions that are similar. Birney's notions about creativity move toward Stafford's that writing poetry, in particular, may be salvational. In a more general way creative adaptation suggests an understanding or discovery of our interconnectedness or brotherhood. And both poets assert the importance of this fact in their belief that it can only lead to more responsible actions on the part of humanity. This middle ground represents choice and responsibility and this is a new attitude. Birney says, "It's not stone that lures and betrays" so too the natural world, in itself, can not save us.[7] Birney and Stafford recognize that only the qualities which make us unique and give pleasure can either destroy us or save us. The responsibility lies with us and this attitude roots them in the twentieth century. Unless we are open and receptive we will not learn what the natural world may stand for, and the only way this is possible is for us to become conscious of the models it may hold, of the limitations of the self, and of responsibility for each other and the natural world.

In discussing Stafford's use of the past it was suggested that this may represent a subtle national difference. In my view, however, there is nothing in the conclusions of either poet to indicate national differences. Each moves beyond any particular difference to approach Sauer's definition of landscape. They attempt to comprehend, through their selection of the particular and the general, both the physical and the cultural landscape, and in Bluntschli's words "to comprehend land and life in terms of each other."[8] The sense of place that each carries belongs to a personal past, and to a psychological state, as well as to a particular landscape that is really just a paradigm for the natural world that surrounds us all, and involves us all, although we may not realize it. Birney and Stafford are not poets concerned with differences, but rather are concerned with "brotherhood" and "convergences." They are concerned with the "news of the universe."

NOTES

Preface

[1] Robert Bly, "The Dead World and the Live World," *The Sixties*, No. 8 (1966), p. 2.

[2] Earle Birney, *Spreading Time: Remarks on Canadian Writing and Writers Book I: 1904-1949* (Montreal: Véhicule Press, 1980), p. 47.

[3] William Stafford, *Down in My Heart* (Elgin, Ill.: The Brethren Press, 1947), pp. 8-9.

[4] William Stafford, "So Long," in *Stories That Could Be True: New and Collected Poems* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1977), p. 198.

Chapter I: Background

[1] Carl Sauer, "The Morphology of Landscape," in *Land and Life: A Selection from the Writings of Carl Ortwin Sauer*, ed. John Leighly (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963), p. 321.

[2] Sauer, p. 322.

[3] Sauer, p. 322.

[4] I will use the terms "nature" and "natural world" in the sense of common usage: exclusive of man-made.

[5] This paragraph is a synthesis of information from several sources: Douglas John Hall, "Man and Nature in the Modern West: A Revolution of Images," in *Man and Nature on the Prairies*, ed. Richard Allen (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 1976), pp. 77-93; Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, Rev. ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), pp. 1-43; Yi-Fu Tuan, *Man and Nature* (Washington, D.C.: Association of American Geographers, 1971), pp. 1-8, 34-37.

[6] Tuan, p. 34.

[7] Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (London, 1964; rpt. New York: Oxford University

Press, 1979), pp. 19-23.

[8] Marx, pp. 5-11.

[9] Marx, pp. 9-10.

[10] Marx, pp. 16-33.

[11] Marx, p. 22.

[12] Marx, p. 23.

[13] Marx, p. 71.

[14] For a succinct history of gardens see Paul Shephard, Man in the Landscape: A Historic View of the Esthetics of Nature (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967), pp. 65-118.

[15] Marx, pp. 3-11; Henry Nash Smith, Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950), pp. 3-12.

Chapter II: Earle Birney

[1] Earle Birney, "Oldster," in The Collected Poems of Earle Birney (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1975), I, 50. All further citations will be from this collection and will be identified by volume number (I or II) and page number.

[2] Desmond Pacey, "Earle Birney," in Ten Canadian Poets: A Group of Biographical and Critical Essays (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1958), p. 310.

[3] Northrop Frye, "Canada and Its Poetry," in The Bush Garden: Essays on the Canadian Imagination (Toronto: House of Anansi Press Ltd., 1971), p. 138.

[4] Margaret Atwood, Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature (Toronto: House of Anansi Press Limited, 1972), pp. 55-58, 60-61; D. G. Jones, Butterfly on Rock: A Study of Themes and Images in Canadian Literature (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), pp. 20-23, 123-28; Tom Marshall, "The Mountaineer: Earle Birney," in Harsh and Lovely Land: The Major Canadian Poets and the Making of a Canadian Tradition (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1979), pp. 61-66.

[5] Jones, p. 22.

[6] Jones, p. 22.

[7] Jones, p. 126.

[8] Atwood, p. 58.

[9] Marshall, p. 62.

[10] Marshall, p. 62.

[11] Frank Davey, Earle Birney (Toronto: The Copp Clark Publishing Company, 1971), p. 85.

[12] Richard H. Robillard, Earle Birney (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1971), p. 8.

[13] Robillard, p. 25.

[14] Peter Aichinger, "Nature Poetry," in Earle Birney (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1979), p. 103.

[15] Aichinger, p. 107.

[16] Aichinger, pp. 118-20.

[17] Atwood and Jones are good examples of this.

[18] Earle Birney, The Creative Writer (Toronto: Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 1966), p. 1.

[19] Birney, Creative Writer, p. 2.

[20] Birney, Creative Writer, p. 2.

[21] Birney, Creative Writer, p. 66.

[22] Birney, Creative Writer, pp. 45, 69-70.

[23] Birney, Creative Writer, p. 3.

[24] Birney, Creative Writer, p. 5.

[25] Edith Hamilton, Mythology (New York: New American Library of World Literature, Inc., 1953), pp. 27, 311.

[26] Pacey, p. 322.

[27] Aichinger, p. 107.

[28] Robillard, pp. 20-21.

[29] Aichinger, p. 110.

[30] Robillard, p. 42.

[31] Aichinger, p. 110.

[32] Robillard, p. 42.

[33] Robillard, p. 42.

[34] Marx, pp. 11-16.

[35] Aichinger, p. 110.

[36] Davey, p. 71.

[37] Aichinger, p. 110.

[38] Jones, p. 125.

[39] Jones, p. 125.

[40] Robillard, pp. 24-25.

[41] T. D. MacLulich, "Earle Birney's 'David': A Reconsideration," CVII, 2, No. 3 (Aug. 1976), 24-25.

[42] Zailig Pollock and Raymond E. Jones, "The Transformed Vision: Earle Birney's 'David'," English Studies in Canada, 3, No. 2 (Summer 1977), 223.

[43] Pollock and Jones, p. 229. Both Atwood and Marshall link responsibility and guilt, but Pollock and Jones are the first critics to expand on the notion.

[44] Earle Birney, The Cow Jumped Over The Moon: The Writing and Reading of Poetry (Toronto: Holt, Rinehart and Winston of Canada, Limited, 1972), p. 7.

[45] MacLulich, p. 26.

[46] Birney, Cow, pp. 7-8.

[47] MacLulich, p. 26.

[48] Birney, Cow, p. 33.

[49] Birney, Cow, p. 33.

[50] Birney, Cow, p. 17.

[51] Robillard, p. 8.

[52] Robillard, p. 25.

[53] Jones, p. 125.

[54] Jones, p. 125.

[55] Birney, Creative Writer, pp. 29-31.

[56] Birney, Creative Writer, p. 32.

[57] Birney, Creative Writer, p. 33.

[58] Pacey, p. 322.

[59] Aichinger, p. 103.

[60] Davey, p. 87.

[61] Aichinger, pp. 106-107.

[62] Birney, Creative Writer, p. 70.

[63] Birney, Creative Writer, p. 66.

Chapter III: William Stafford

[1] William Stafford, "Earth Dweller," in Stories That Could Be True: New and Collected Poems (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1977), p. 196. All further citations will be from this collection and will be identified by CP and the page number. In addition poems will be used from two more recent collections: Going Places and Things That Happen Where There Aren't Any People and will be identified by GP and TTH and the page number.

[2] William Heyen, "William Stafford's Allegiances," Modern Poetry Studies, 1, No. 6 (1970), 307-18. Linda Wagner, "William Stafford's Plain Style," Modern Poetry Studies, 6, No. 1 (Spring 1975), 19-30.

[3] J. Russell Roberts, "Listening to the Wilderness With William Stafford," Western American Literature, 3, No. 3 (Fall 1968), 217.

[4] John Lauber, "World's Guest--William Stafford," Iowa Review, 5, No. 2 (Spring 1974), 88.

[5] Lauber, p. 100.

[6] Richard Hugo, "Problems with Landscapes in Early Stafford Poems," Kansas Quarterly, 2, No. 2 (Spring 1970), 33, 37.

[7] Hugo, pp. 33-34.

[8] George S. Lensing, "William Stafford, Mythmaker," *Modern Poetry Studies*, 6, No. 1 (Spring 1975), 4.

[9] Lensing, pp. 1-17.

[10] Dennis Daley Lynch, "Journeys in Search of Oneself: The Metaphor of the Road in William Stafford's *Traveling Through the Dark* and *The Rescued Year*," *Modern Poetry Studies*, 7, No. 2 (Autumn 1976), 122-31.

[11] Jonathan Holden, *The Mark to Turn: A Reading of William Stafford's Poetry* (Lawrence, Manhattan, Witchita: The University of Kansas Press, 1976), p. 8.

[12] George S. Lensing and Ronald Moran, *Four Poets and the Emotive Imagination: Robert Bly, James Wright, Louis Simpson, and William Stafford* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1976), p. 215.

[13] Cynthia Lofsness, ed., "An Interview with William Stafford," *The Iowa Review*, 3, No. 3 (Summer 1972), 98. In discussing his work as a process that does not worry about rigid adherence to forms Stafford has said:

> ". . . the feel of composition is more important than any rule or prescribed form. . . . When I'm writing, I'm not at all trying to fit in any forms, . . . it's not a technique, it's a kind of stance to take towards experience, or an attitude to take towards immediacy feelings and thoughts while you're writing. That seems important to me. . . . I just start to write whatever occurs to me, no matter how trivial, in order to get into motion, and the process of writing calls up other things, and a kind of train sets in, the sequence that comes about because I'm in motion." (pp. 98, 101)

[14] William Stafford, "At Home on Earth," *The Hudson Review*, 23 (Autumn 1970), p. 481.

[15] Holden, pp. 33-34.

[16] Holden, p. 34.

[17] Lensing, p. 4.

[18] Philip Gerber and Robert Gemmett, eds., "Keeping the Lines Wet: A Conversation With William Stafford," *Prairie Schooner*, 44, No. 2 (Summer 1970), 124-25.

[19] Lofsness, p. 105.

[20] Lensing, p. 5.

[21] Lensing and Moran, p. 211.

[22] Peter Ellsworth, ed., "A Conversation with William Stafford," The Chicago Review, 30, No. 1 (Summer 1978), 97.

[23] Holden, p. 19.

[24] Holden, pp. 20-21.

[25] Holden, p. 22.

[26] D. Nathan Sumner, "The Poetry of William Stafford: Nature, Time, and Father," Research Studies (University of Washington), 36, No. 1 (Mar. 1968), 188-89.

[27] Holden, p. 36.

[28] Lensing and Moran, p. 204.

[29] Holden, p. 10.

[30] Holden, p. 11.

[31] Holden, p. 12.

[32] Holden, p. 12.

[33] Lensing and Moran, pp. 214-15.

[34] Holden, p. 43.

[35] Holden, p. 43.

[36] Holden, p. 43.

[37] Lauber, p. 94.

[38] Holden, p. 48.

[39] Greg Orfalea, "The Warm Stoic: William Stafford," in A Book of Rereadings in Recent Poetry--30 Essays, ed. Greg Kuzma (Lincoln, Neb.: Pebble and Best Cellar Press, 1979), p. 296.

[40] Holden, p. 6.

[41] Richard Hugo and William Stafford, "The Third Time the World Happens," (a dialogue), Northwest Review, 13, No. 3 (1973), 30.

[42] Roberts, pp. 217-26.

[43] Holden, pp. 53-55.

[44] Lensing and Moran, p. 184.

[45] Lensing and Moran, p. 202.

[46] Lensing and Moran, p. 203.

[47] Holden, pp. 39-41.

[48] This idea was first noticed and suggested to me by Professor B. Almon. He noticed the similarity between the poem and Tolkien's Hobbits who are burrowers.

[49] Holden, p. 58.

[50] Carol Kyle, "Point of View in 'Returned to Say' and the Wilderness of William Stafford," Western American Literature, 7, No. 3 (Fall 1972), 200.

[51] Holden, pp. 30-32.

[52] Roberts, p. 225; Lynch, pp. 127-29; Lensing and Moran, pp. 199-200.

[53] Warren French, "'Sunflowers through the Dark': The Vision of William Stafford," in Late Harvest: Plains and Prairie Poets, ed. Robert Killoren (Kansas City: BkMk Press, 1977), p. 189.

[54] Orfalea, pp. 285-86.

[55] Hugo, p. 38.

[56] Hugo, p. 38.

[57] Hugo, p. 38.

[58] Lofsness, p. 96.

[59] Stafford would regret this statement. When asked by Lofsness when he first realized he wanted to become a poet he answers with the question: "when did other people give up the idea of being a poet?" (92). It is an unfortunate situation that many are discouraged, in various ways, from writing but I believe many people do find other accesses to expression that are equally forceful through other creative arts.

[60] Lensing and Moran, p. 210.

[61] Lensing and Moran, p. 210.

[62] Gerber and Gemmett, pp. 124-25.

[63] Lensing and Moran, pp. 184-92.

[64] Gerber and Gemmett, p. 125.

Chapter IV: Conclusions

[1] Birney, Creative Writer, p. 66.

[2] Stafford, "At Home," p. 481.

[3] Earle Birney, "Coming of Age in Erickson, B.C.," in B.C. Outdoors, 36, Nos. 9-12 (Sept. - Dec. 1980), 29-31, 60-61; 31-35; 33-36; 31-35.

[4] This idea was first pointed out to me by Professor D. Jackel, although he may argue it differently.

[5] Birney, Spreading Time, pp. 14-21.

[6] Marx, p. 71.

[7] Birney, Cow, p. 7.

[8] Sauer, p. 322.

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